

A PRIVATE
Conference,
BETWEEN
A Rich Alderman
AND
A Poor Country Vicar,
made Publick.

Wherein is discoursed
The Obligation of OATHS
which have been imposed on
the Subjects of *England*.
With other Matters relating to the
Present State of Affairs.

*Ridentem dicere verum
Quid vetat ?*

LONDON,
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THE
PUBLISHER
TO THE
READER.



His following Discourse
(being a cursory Dialogue) cannot admit exactness of Stile, nor endure the Test of too critical reflections. The matter, in the general, may not be unworthy the perusal of those who, knowing their Obligation, better than they are acquainted with its discharge, may perhaps be perswaded, at last, to be instrumental in our settlement and Peace; nor of such also

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who,

To the Reader.

who, being just to themselves in relation to their present quiet and future bliss, would shun the espousals of such Principles as are contrariant to the great Maximes of their Reason. Nothing is designed derogatory to Grandeur, or to detract from Authority even in little Towns; but all to establish Empire and Power, in just and equal subordination. There are some Expressions jocular, and merry, to render the perusal more pleasant: (and it is no wonder to see Passion kindled in so large a Discourse, where the concerns of both Parties seemed so great.) But yet it is hoped none that may give just offense to any that is faithful, either to his Prince or Religion. Though the Vicar, by reason of his Poverty,

To the Reader.

Poverty, and dependence, is forced to an high Contest with the Alderman, before he can obtain the liberty of his discourse; yet what urbanity or submission is deficient in his expression, is abundantly made up by the modesty of his deportment: Nor would you at all wonder at the boldness of his Language, if you knew either the Actors, or the Scene, all, alike, mean, and obscure: The inequality of the match is only in this, that the Alderman is too big and weighty for the Vicar, and the Vicar, again, too nimble for the Alderman, both proportionable to their Table, and Revenue.

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Private Conference
 BETWIXT
 A Rich ALDERMAN
 AND
 A Poor VICAR.

Alderman



*Ood morrow M. Vicar,
 How fares it with you
 this Morning?*

Vicar. The better

*Sir, I thank your
 good Worship, for the large Supper I had
 at your House the last night.*

*Ald. Truly, all reason in the World we
 should be kind to our Minister, from whom we
 receive the bread of Life: You shall be wel-
 come to me at any time: Will you walk now
 with me, and take your mornings draught?*

*Vic. Verily, I am much bound to this
 Town for their kind Respects: For indeed,
 they have very much advanced my Profits
 in this place, the Dues of my Vicaridge be-*

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being (as you well know) but twenty Marks *per annum*, and amongst you it is now raised to full fifteen Pounds: And more especially am I obliged to your Worship, for I have of you both Money and Provision; you do not only entertain me with Friendship at your own House, but also give me my Loading home.

Ald. *You are a Person, Sir, so meek, and humble, that indeed the Corporation have as great an esteem for you, as for any man that has been in the Town within my remembrance. For sometimes we have had those, who have been so stubborn, and self-will'd, and so prodigiously proud, that they have made no more reckoning of the Mayor and Aldermen, than if they had Country Gentlemen to deal with; that would pass along with little salute, unless we quite put off our Grandeur, and dispensed with all gravity and decorum, in moving our Hats to them again. And (as if the State did not command the Church) if we did not come to the place of hearing within half an hour after they were in their Pew, (contrary to all duty both to God and man, and what is more, the Antient Customs of this Town) they would begin Prayers. So that if we had any Customers (as sometimes you know we have) that we have not quite dispatched, or any Post Letters*

made Publick.

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Letters to write, which you know may be of great consequence, or had staid out something late Saturday night, we should lose some, if not all our Devotions. Nay, what rendered our lives more full of trouble than all these losses; their Wives were so scandalously Proud, that they would wear their long Scarfs down to the ground, and now and then, by a wilful mistake, get the upper hand of a Shop-keepers Wife, whose Husband may be worth an hundred or two of pounds, and within a little time may be an Alderman of the Town.

Vic. Truly, Sir, I like not such peremptory men; and as for their women, because I my self am a single man, I can neither blame, nor excuse them; because I find an infectious air in the World, that swells womankind generally beyond their own, or their Husbands proportion. But I know your goodness is such, that you would not lay the Clergy too low.

Ald. No truly, I would not have them made contemptible in the places where they are, and even in this Town, I could be content they should take place of all, but the Corporation and their Wives. And the reason why we Townsmen have such cause to assert the dignity of our Wives, is not only because I married my Maid out of meer love, and so affection commands

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much from me, but because they assist us with their advice, in the management of the most weighty Affairs of the Town, and help support that great Burden that our Heads and Shoulders are laden withal, so that by these our honour is much exalted.

Vic. Sir, There is none that shall more cordially wish welfare, and exaltation to that than my self, and I am sorry that I am not in a capacity to advance your Honour more; nor shall I trouble my self in reference unto place, but yield to the advancement of what (like a worthy Townsman) you zealously desire.

Ald. I thank you, Sir, for your kind respects to the Town and Corporation, and I perceive you will every day merit and encrease our love to you: but indeed that Minister that was here last, was too remiss in his duty unto us, though he was a man of good parts, and would Preach very well in the Pulpit; but his Conversation was not answerable to his Doctrine, nor did his Deportment, toward us and our Wives, evidence that Humility that ought to have been in him, or that regard that was due to us.

Vic. Truly then he was to blame; for I have heard that (besides his twenty Marks duly paid him) he seldom made a Meal at home,

home, but was, as it were, the Common Almes-man of the Town, and a true Trencher Chaplain. And yet (lest I should seem, through Interest, to consent to the staining of mine own Coat) I am willing to excuse him, and think the best; sure your Worship may be partial, and charge him too severely.

Ald. How Sir? You were as good say that I am unjust. Do you think I would offer to scandalize a man; or to blame him that were not blame worthy?

Vic. Nay, Sir, I humbly beg your Worships pardon, if my words have been rash, or unadvised.

Ald. You do well to own your subjection to us, and to submit with modesty, where your words shall seem to carry any imputation, or disrespect.

Vic. Sir, If I could not mortifie, and deny my self, I were unfit to be a Minister in this Town. And yet I hope you will pardon me, if, for my further information (that I may be the better able to limit and bound mine own Actions) I am a little inquisitive into the deportment of my Predecessour; I suppose that when (according to his duty) he did not stay beyond the Canonical hour, when the greater occasions of

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the Corporation would not permit them to be at Church so soon as usually; he presumed your Worships would not come that time, or else that the Congregation would attend no longer.

Ald. No: Sometimes when we have chid him for not having more regard to the Authority of the Place, and punished him with the loss of his Sundaies Dinner, he has performed his Duty for all that: Nay, and when we have enjoined him, with the gravest Aspect, and the most frowning Countenance Mr. Mayor could make, and what is worse, on pain of losing all our Gratnities; Nay, when some Chapmen expected us at home, or some Parish Business was to be done in the Church, or some Rents to be divided at the Town Hall, and he has been commanded to cut off but half the Prayers; this audacious and rebellious Person, notwithstanding Mr. Mayors Order, read all his Prayers, and Preached too, and conjectured in his ungodly and wicked heart, that the Rules and Canons of the Church (so called) were to be observed, notwithstanding Mr. Mayors, not only discountenance but, commands to the contrary.

Vic. Truly (Mr. Alderman) with humble leave first begg'd of your good Worship, I conceive, the Canons of the Church are
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to be obeyed, *non obstante* Mr. Mayors counter Order ; both because they are established by Act of Parliament, and the Duty of Obedience to the King and Church perswades us ; and lastly, because we are sworn to their strict observation.

Ald. But Mr. Mayor represents the King, and therefore may dispense with Penal Laws.

Vic. Although the King may dispense with Penal Laws, and may suspend the inflictions due to Offendors, it being his great Prerogative, derived from Heaven, that makes him more properly a God on Earth, to be able to pardon faults, and the Executive Power of the Law being in him, he may withdraw what he cannot abrogate : Yet pardon me, if I say, that Mr. Mayor is not in this the Kings Representative, unless he could exchange his Mace for a Scepter, quit his Gown for a Robe of State, turn Calveskins into Ermins, and barter his Sattin Coife for a Crown.

Ald. Sir, You are now grown a little too bold, I shall be angry, if you thus speak against Mr. Mayors Prerogative.

Vic. I hope you would not have M. Mayor accounted a King, and Majesty added to his Worship ; you have for several years made

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him Right Worshipful, and been (as I am told) outrageous with your Minister, if he has not informed God Almighty of it once or twice every Sunday.

Ald. I hope your passion will not make you peremptory too, and cause you to forget with whom you are discoursing.

Vic. I humbly beg your good Worships pardon; 'twas only zeal for his Majesties Prerogative that thus transported me; I must still beseech your excuse, if I conjecture a possibility of mistake in you, to think that Mr. Mayor can dispense with Law, as the Kings Representative.

Ald. Now you seem to relent for the misdemeanour of your words, I can more willingly hearken to your Discourse, especially when your Language is so placed, that it does not affront, but acknowledge Superiority. Pray tell me why Mr. Mayor, as the Kings Lieutenant, and Representative, cannot dispense with Law.

Vic. You know Law is not my Profession, but yet I can exhibite Reason enough against such strange, and (if it might be pardoned) I would say, uncouth Positions.

Ald. Come then let us hear yours, and the rest I shall enquire of the Town-Clerk.

Vic. First,

Vic. First, Because the King himself does not pretend to dispense with Law, and therefore his Court of Chancery (as I have heard) does not judge contrary unto Law, but either mitigate, and abate its rigour, or give relief where Common Law gives none; that not the least oppression may be heard in our Streets. And, secondly, supposing the King did dispense with Law, yet Mr. Mayor has only so much power as is committed to him in a certain Charter, which indeed gives the Corporation power to make By-Laws, for the benefit of the Town; but by no means liberty, by themselves, to violate Acts of Parliament, or to permit the breach of them in others: But, as to what we are at present making our enquiry into, viz. the Laws of the Church, these are without the verge of the Corporations Power, and they can neither protect us from the Penalties and Punishments due for such wilful Disobedience, nor absolve us from the guilt by the default contracted.

Ald. Well, but admitting then, that Acts of Parliament are to be obeyed; I would fain know how your second reason becomes argumentative, and evinces your Obedience due to the Church, notwithstanding our Injunctions to the contrary.

Vic. If

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Vic. If your Worship please to suspend your censure of my discourse for a bold presumption, I shall give you an account of that too.

Ald. *I would not have you to think me so critical, or captious, but that I can bear Reason and Argument in any dress; especially when you are so civil, as to beg leave for the familiarity of your discourse.*

Vic. I thank your Worship for your candour and condescension; and shall give you to understand, that I ought to be obedient to the Church, not only as I am a Member, or a Minister, by vertue of which relations I am more especially obliged: But as all Government does suppose Obedience and Submission due, and we therefore combine in a Common Body, for the preservation of Propriety, as well as Society; so the defect of sense of such an Obligation, violates all the bonds of Authority, breaks down the Pale by which Government and Rule is fenced, and laies it open to every bold Usurper, and Intruder. Thus not only Empires and Kingdoms have been laid waste, and made pastures only for Birds and Beasts of Prey; but by this means the Wall, both of separation, and defense, being once assaulted, and, in an hostile manner, scaled and battered,
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the Temple of God is not only left without its Bulwarks, but invaded and shot at by its Adversaries, until the Structure becomes demolished, and there is scarce one stone left upon another. The Church (you know) is compared to a Vine, fenced in not only by an immediate Providence; but its own Laws, and Authority to enforce them, are not only that which supports the branches, but also defends the very root: Now withdraw but the Obligation, and sense of obedience, and all the branches will desert the root, the Foxes will devour their present fruit, and the wild Bore will dig up the root, and thus shall the whole languish and decay.

Ald. *But cannot you prove, some other way, than from the nature of Government in the general, that obedience is due to the Churches Laws? This seems only to be composed of good words, without significancy of an Obligation.*

Vic. I had thought, to discourse from Principles of Policy had been the surest way to convince you; because your Age and Wisdom have called you to the degree of an Alderman, by which sharing in Authority and Government, you would, from the view of your own experience, collect the
misery,

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misery, and destroying fate of the least disorder, much more when disobedience dares put off her Mask, and come abroad with open face, hurling all into an Ataxy and Confusion : when an embodied Society have agreed upon certain Laws and Principles, by which they have both constituted and impowered a part of the whole to take care of the rest, wherein particular interests are alwaies to submit to the preservation of the general commerce and universal welfare ; If the actings of particulars shall not only appear disorderly and mutinous, but the very *Magna Charta*, the foundation of the Government shall be undermined by a flat denial of any Obedience or Homage due, it must needs dissolve the very Principles, make the Empire crack with its weight and burden, and reduce this Community into an universal Chaos.

Ald. *But since your Office is Divinity, and you are not called to any place of trust in the Government of the State, it will (as seems to me) best become you to keep within your own Confines, and tread only upon holy ground.*

Vic. *Why? I hope your Worship does not think your Office prophane.*

Ald. *No, Friend, but I think you will prophane my Authority if you dare (notwithstanding*

standing all my advice) be skill'd in the Principles of Policy and Government, and lay down Rules of Confinement to your Superiours: I must not suffer my sage ears so far to disparage my head, as to endure to hear one to teach me mine own Trade. Pray prove obedience to your Church some other way, than from Rules of Policy, for by this you seem to encroach upon us so far, as not only to take away our Priviledges and Prerogative, but defraud us of the very Arguments to defend us.

Vic. If your Worship please but to keep one eye open for the Churches Cause, and let your other sleep to your own Interest, I suppose I may, in mine own habit, without any damage at all to your Ears, in a few words, evince my duty of submission and obedience to the Church, even from the second Topick mentioned; that Obedience to it is our duty.

Ald. *That I would have, not only promised, but performed; for I have sometimes seen Reasons, where the Stems have weighed more than the fruit.*

Vic. Now your Worship seems to be pleasant; a man would scarce expect such light wit from so grave an head, but experience is that which makes men rich in all things. And yet that I may remember your Worship,

of

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of some thing which you already know ; I shall not trouble you with the ready submission (though uneasy obedience, by reason of those raging and persecuting thorns from Jewish Malice, and Heathen Fury, which continually, like the Souldiers Spear in our Saviours Side, tormented and grieved them) unto the Christian Church, in its Bishops, and Representatives, in its first plantation ; though not without the publick assaults, of open Hereticks, no more than free from the secret thrusts of those that seemed bosome Friends. But I know you expect Scripture should be judge, and prove what it seems you account a Problem. For the Jews submission to their Sanhedrim, I hope you will not trouble your self so much as to doubt : Nor for the Apostles subjection to our Saviour, as to him who had the Government upon his shoulders, who received his Jurisdiction and Authority from the Father, and was anointed from above. Nor will you question, I suppose, the submission of the Christian Church to the Discipline, as well as Doctrine of the Apostles, whom Christ invested with the same Authority that he had received from his Father, in relation to their Presidency and Jurisdiction over the Church ; in that Consecration of His ; *As my*

my Father sent me, so send I you : Only, perhaps, you may still doubt, whether this Rule and Authority requiring submission and subjection to its Decrees, was conveighed from the Apostles to others. But you will have no cause to mistrust that neither, when you shall seriously reflect upon the Epistles of the Apostles to the several Churches; and more especially to those Angels and Bishops, who were there intrusted with the Discipline and Government, as well as feeding the Flock of Christ, which he had purchased with his blood. Or if you will observe matter of fact, and from thence draw the certainty of our Conclusion; You may read St. Paul sending his Orders to *Timothy* and *Titus*, giving them directions how to govern the Diocesses of *Crete* and *Ephesus*. And it would be endless to enumerate all the Exhortations and Commands to obey our Church Rulers; Obey them (saies the Apostle) that have the Rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls as they that must give an account. This last Clause plainly restrains it to the Bishops of *Judea*, and therefore *οὐκ ἐπιταγοῦν λέγου*, saies St. Chrysostome. But in the fifteenth of the *Acts* you have enough to silence all doubts of this nature, and bring your Worship not only to
Reverence,

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Reverence, but to a resignation of your self as to your Souls direction and guidance into the Churches hands; and then you will the easier dispense with us, for obeying that so chearfully, and fideliously, which we earnestly perswade others to a submission to.

Ald. I like this discourse indifferently well, only have a care that your Church does not intrench upon the Authority of our Town; and compel the Corporation to come and bow to your Altar.

Vic. Ile warrant your Worship, by the grace of God, if you can but defend your selves from the Womens Tongues, you shall not be offended with Church Musick, nor knock your shins when you bow towards the Altar.

Ald. Come on then pleasant Mr. Vicar, let us hear the conclusion of this matter, you promised me something out of the fifteenth of the Acts.

Vic. I did so (Sir) and by Gods help I shall perform it; we find there that there was a great difference arole at Antioch about Circumcision, for it seems there had come down men from Judea, who taught the Brethren, that except they were Circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be

be saved; They presently therefore select their Clerks, and depute their Delegates, and Representatives, to go, and joyn with the Colledge at *Jerusalem*, that so they might have a full Convocation, and their Sentence, thus assembled, fully silenced all disputes, and was to them a Rule and Canon, to which they presently yield obedience.

Ald. *But this was an Apostolical Canon, therefore infallible because inspired.*

Vic. I hope I shall obtain your pardon, if herein I rectifie your mistake; First, Others went with *Paul* and *Barnabas* that were not Apostles. Secondly, The Council consisted principally of the Bishops of *Judea*; whereof one, to wit, *James* of *Jerusalem*, was President. Finally, Upon strict view of the whole, we find that probably there were but four Apostles there, to wit, *Peter*, and *John*, who were there before, and *Paul* and *Barnabas* sent from *Antioch*. And this, craving your Worships pardon, I must look upon for my Rule.

Ald. *But is not the Temporal above the Spiritual Power? In all this that you have said, there was no countermand of any Temporal Magistrate, but, in our discourse, we supposed Mr. Mayor to have commanded the contrary.*

C

Vic. Indeed,

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Vic. Indeed, Sir, but that necessity enforces me to have respect to your Port, rather than Wisdom, I could be passionate, to see you mistake Mr. Mayor for the King, and think the Supreme Authority of the Land still confined to your own Corporation: Should your Argument be put on to the full, and urged with relation to the right Person, you would put me an hard Chapter to read, and I must submit, or lose my Vicaridge: But I hope a blind mans mistake will not put out others eyes.

Ald. Sir, You are something too confident to conjecture me so old, that I cannot see; I tell you, you have no establishment in the World without the Temporal Authority; this supports you, this gives you leave to perform your Ministry within the Kings Dominions. This gives, and confirms all your maintenance.

Vic. Indeed, Sir, we have great reason to thank Almighty God, that he has given, at this time, a nursing Father to his Holy Church; and that he not only permits Christianity, but encourages it, both by his own example, and liberal maintenance of both able, and Orthodox Clergy. And I hope whilst we remember our duty to the Church we shall never forget Loyalty to our King.

Ald. B.

Ald. But he that will be Loyal to the King will submit also to Governours, and those that are Commissioned by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. You seem to be very tender of his Majesty, but you still forget the Mayor and Corporation.

Vic. I do think I have sufficient cause to remember them all days of my life; and have once mentioned their liberality already; I shall readily obey Mr. Mayor, in all things that the King and Laws command a submission from me in.

Ald. You still have your Tacite Conditions, and leave room for a mental Reservation: Let me advise you, to do in all things according as Mr. Mayor and the Corporation shall direct; and let not a Lawn Sleeve prevail more with you than a Scarlet Gown. Corporations make Parliament men, and they make all the Laws, and—— Give some credit to an old man; Corporations, upon the matter, rule the Land: and therefore have a care you do not wrong your self by affronting them.

Vic. I am so far from affronting of your Worships, that I shall be ready, upon all occasions, to testify my submission and reverence to you; still with a *salvo* to mine own Conscience, and that I may keep mine

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Oath of Canonical Obedience, by which I have tied my self up to the Commands of my Dioceſan in all lawful and honeſt things.

Ald. But ſtay a little ! I have one Argument beyond the care of any Biſhops, or any other that I know of, for your total reſignation to our diſpoſal ; And that is, That your income is not eſtabliſhed by Law, nor does any Biſhop at all encourage Miniſters that are in Market Towns, but ſuffer them to labour without reward ; nay, not only ſo, but ſometimes they have nothing for all their pains, but ſevere ſtripes from their Officers. And therefore you are more eſpecially obliged to ſubmit to our wills, becauſe your dependence is wholly upon them.

Vic. Sir, I confeſs, Intereſt is a great temptation, eſpecially to us that have little hope of larger Poſſeſſions, ſhould this be withdrawn from us ; but although I ſhal always be dutiful and obedient to your Worſhips, I cannot violate the Obligation of mine Oath and Conſcience both, and ſo make a wound upon my ſelf, that the whole World cannot cure.

Ald. Come, come Mr. Vicar, I would adviſe you to eſcape that ſnare that ſome of your Predeceſſours have been entangled in, and for want of a due reverence and ſubmiſſion,
have

have lost almost all their Benevolences.

Vic. Truly (if it shall please your Worship, we were better sustain some Temporal losses, with the preservation and safety of a good Conscience (though I should be very loath to incur your displeasure) than, by a violation of our Oaths, to forfeit all our faithfulness and honesty here, and hazard our welfare hereafter, only to humour some few men, and enjoy a something more plentiful Revenue.

Ald. All this will be readily granted; but surely God Almighty has not tied us up so strait, as that we must be religious to our own prejudice. He never laced our Consciences so strait, but that we might, upon occasion, widen them. Alas, this making Religion such a close Garment, causes it to become like Steel bodies, that sometimes reduce the extravagancy of a shoulderblade, but breed an Ulcer and Consumption in the Lungs. If we weigh out but a pound of Prunes, we allow Paper and Packthread with it; If we sell but a Pipe of Wine, we suffer the Vintner to be drunk into the bargain. These Cases of Conscience have spoyled the World: If you pursue the Consequence of your Discourse, I think you will quickly condemn us all, and then we shall not have the benefit of our Clergy.

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Vic. Pray, Sir, be not so outrageous, I do not at all sentence you, but prove mine own Obligation; and as a natural Son of the Church, I must be dutiful and obedient to my Mother: Do you think (besides the Bond of my Relation) an Oath to be so slight a thing, as to be violated and broken, with all the heat of passion, and deliberate wilfulness, and yet the person burdened and loaded with all this guilt, to escape the imputation and the Crime of Perjury?

Ald. Pray, Sir, be modest in your Expressions, and impute what you please unto yourself, but have a care that you speak not of Oaths in general, lest you despise Dominion, and speak evil of Dignities.

Vic. Although, Sir, your Cautions and Commands would make any one, that had not a great respect to himself, and a greater for you, warm with passion: Yet I shall beg leave only to tell you, that he that makes a Promissory Oath, is bound (if the matter of the Oath be lawful, and there be no Error in the Imposition) as much as in him lies to perform it.

Ald. You were as good say, that the Mayor and Justices are all forsworn. Truly, I could find in my heart to acquaint the whole Bench with it, and have you punished for talking against Perjury.

Vic. I

Vic. I hope, Mr. Alderman, your Worship will not make a Private Discourse of Publick Concernment, nor injure me to the whole House, for performing my duty in discourse with you. But however it shall fare with me in relation to that, I think it incumbent upon me as a Minister, to endeavour to convince you of the truth of what either Ignorance or Irreligion causes you to mistrust.

Ald. *I hope you will not be so presumptuous, as to suppose that men, arrived at our Age, and Grandeur, can be so ignorant, as not to know our duty, or so vile and Atheistical as not to perform it.*

Vic. I shall neither presume to be accuser or judge of any person in particular, but certainly, in the general, Perjury and contempt of Oaths, is no less hainous than damning sin; or else the third Commandment will scarce be Moral; nor would that be repeated with a solemn Sanction, Thou shalt not forswear thy self, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths.

Ald. *Well; but suppose that granted, that there is such a thing as Perjury: Yet it may consist only in this, when we confirm a false thing by an Oath; swearing contrary to what we know, or are persuaded to be true: And this cannot at all reach us.*

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Vic. I do not here speak of Perjury in a Witness, but a Judge; and since you will not allow mine own Oath of Canonical Obedience to oblige me, let us see where you are not perjured when you have sworn to put those Laws in execution that belong to you as Justices of the Peace.

Ald. *It seems then you would suppose us guilty of Perjury, for the breach of such Oaths as nobody, that I know, keeps.*

Vic. We are told (I am sure) that we must not run with the Multitude to do evil; and I do not think that the Numbers in Hell do mitigate and abate, but rather advance and encrease torments: For flames are not the less, but more cruel, for that they have the more fuel to consume.

Ald. *Truly, Sir, if you continue and persevere in such Invectives, this Town will prove too hot for you, and you will sooner, for such tart Speeches, forfeit all your Welfare, than we shall possess misery hereafter; And you will sacrifice your blis in those very flames, that your zeal kindles, and your breath blows up to devour both our credit and felicity.*

Vic. Sir, as to your credit, I would not willingly impair that, because some of you live upon it; but as to your felicity, most certain it is, if you repent not in time,
you

you may chance to forfeit that eternally.

Ald. *Your discourse seems now to be close and serious, and therefore pray arrive at some particulars, that I may understand what you drive at, that so I may be able to excuse, or else at least to retract my fault.*

Vic. You now seem not only to have the port and garbe, but the mind and soul of a Pious Magistrate; and therefore I shall act friendly with you, which is best demonstrated by plain dealing; but I hope it shall not prejudice my maintenance.

Ald. *Truly 'tis as you behave your self, for it is the ancient Custome of this Town, to have our Minister alwaies bound to his good behaviour.*

Vic. Truly, Sir, Your Worship may deal as you please with me, and entertain what hard thoughts you will; but what I do is out of Conscience to my duty, and out of meer charity to your immortal Soul.

Ald. *If what you say be real, I see no reason but I may give you leave to go on, only have a care that no blot be thrown upon the Grandeur of the Corporation.*

Vic. Your Worship may already perceive not only candour, but such respect as is due to your Wisdoms, and I well knowing there
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can be no order where Superiority is not well distinguished from its opposite, and that all Government requires subordination, you cannot in reason suspect my regard to duty so much, as to fear any unhandsome reflections, and if there be any thing that may create offence, it must be in your own application.

Ald. I shall thank you, Sir, for your Doctrine, if you will but permit us to make what use we please; for we cannot dislike our own actions, for that were to recant our justice, and proclaim to the World that we were capable of mistake.

Vic. Though the Articles of our Church forbid us to account any one infallible, yet we shall be forced to yield your Power absolute, that deems it a derogation to admit either rebuke or controule.

Ald. We must still maintain the Authority of the Place, and not suppose the least blemish visible in the face of Justice; for that were to cast dust against the Sun, and cover that glorious countenance with a cloud.

Vic. I readily grant to your good Worship, that the Power and Grandeur of the Town is to be maintained, and your Orders executed, without the least violation; for if any Error should be found in you, it must needs

needs be a Scarlet Crime ; and then your Garments themselves would blush for their misfortune. Yet as the pale Moon, that attempts to rule a dark night, is not without some Spots, so the Sun hath his *macula* too ; I hope, therefore, if you should chance, through the Glasse of my Discourse, to see some stains upon your own Garments, though you might suspect the Mirrour, you would not conclude, without due trial, that it made those Spots it pretended to discover.

Ald. *I shall be as candid as my Dignity and Office will permit, and will endeavour to hide that dirt that my Garment has contracted, when it is not violently cast upon it. But I think indeed, that we are as strict in keeping our Decorum, and observing the ancient Customs of the Town, as any Corporation in England ; and indeed we must of necessity be obliget to it, since, besides that they are both decent and laudable, we are sworn to the observation of them.*

Vic. Then it seems your Worship thinks there is Obligation in an Oath.

Ald. *I hope you do not suppose me so Atheistical and irreligious, as not to believe that an Oath is a most solemn thing ; and binds us, upon pain of Divine Vengeance, to*
the

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the performance of all those things that are lawful; with respect still had to the support of our Authority, and Livelihood; and therefore we look upon the Obligation so Sacred, that although we are not Popish observers of Festivals, yet we think it our duty to be punctual in keeping all the stated and publick Feasts of this Town, according to Custom, not only that we may oblige our Friends at the Town Charges, and strengthen the Sergeants that they may the better support the great burden of the Mace, and attendance, but those daies we appear in Publick, to the terrour and astonishment of inferiour Townsmen, in our Sattin Doublets made big for the purpose; and so zealous are we in the performance of this Duty, that you shall scarce have one missing, but the whole Corporation compleat and full. Nay, if we want the least Punctilio either of time or place, or have any distance in our Ranks broken, or any Alderman should chance, through inadvertency, to mend his pace, or finally, any Burgeess should neglect or refuse to pay that homage and honour due to our Grandeur, we presently, in a grave and solemn manner, pronounce him perjured, and sometimes, for the second or third offence, he is disfranchized, and removed both from the Honour and Society of the Corporation.

Vic. That

Vic. That truly is strict and severe, and it seems affrightens and terrifies more than an Excommunication from the Bishops Courts.

Ald. *Alas ! if our Laws should carry no more force with them than your Canons, which are Guns only without any thing to charge them ; and the frown of an Alderman should not be more than the rage of a Bishop, we might hang up our Gowns as Ensigns over the Graves of our Honour, which would not only be dead, but buried too.*

Vic. But the Thunderbolts of Jove were alwaies feared, and when an Excommunication comes forth, Heaven then discharges its Artillery, and shall not the Inhabitants of the World tremble and be afraid ?

Ald. *'Tis a great way betwixt Heaven and Earth, and the spacious air will make the Bullet spend its force before it arrives to hit the Mark ; nor do we think Heavens Ordnance so ill guarded, that any upon the Earth can come to fire them ; and if there were both Permission and Authority, we would trust them at a Battery so far from us, when we only hear the noise, but do not feel the stroke : But now the Temporal Magistrate bears not the Sword in vain ; when Mr. Mayor speaks, the inferior Townsmen fear an Earthquake ; and when he strikes, 'tis not fire to light his Candle,*

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candle, but he makes the streets belch forth flames.

Vic. Truly, Sir, I never took his Worship for an Incendiary; and as for his Speech it is so slow and seldom, that it had need be to purpose when it comes.

Ald. *Thus have I seen, when I was in the Straits, the lofty Etna cast forth both fire and smoke.*

Vic. And thus have I heard an hollow Mountain frequently making great noise.

Ald. *I hope you do not account us hollow.*

Vic. No, Sir, that were scandalously disingenious, when we are discoursing of Town-Festivals; the similitude only lodged in the Mountain, to which you may at this time justly be compared. But that you may not force me any longer to such wandering discourse; I find by your brisk and pleasant Relation of your Town Customs (which I must confess so noble and great, that they are disproportionable to my understanding) that you are not only pleased with their due and punctual observation; but think this your grand Obligation to perform them, because you have solemnly sworn thereto.

Ald. *I hope, Sir, I did not err in that Assertion, nor have mine old age, whose eyes*

eyes are dim, been guilty of an over-sight.

Vic. No, Sir, your Worship, in my poor judgment, hath in this spoken abundance of Reason; and in that you also charged the violation of those Customs you are sworn to, with the damning and odious Crime of Perjury: but from this Concession of yours I shall deduce that Consequence which, I fear, we shall have some Controversie about.

Ald. *I hope you will not be so presumptuously bold, as to dare contend with me; I doubt you will get but little by your shot, besides a rebound of your bullet back into your own face: Pray, Sir, let your Expressions be phrased a little more modestly.*

Vic. I am sorry that it is my misfortune not to talk with one upon equal terms, it is my perpetual misery to place my words, for the most part (to your Worship) as to be misconstrued, and mistaken by you. I design no disrespect to you, nor any dishonour to the Corporation, and I am sure I am used to distance sufficiently, that I may be acquainted with it better.

Ald. *I am glad to hear you so humble, and penitent, as to recant your Error, and too arrogant Expression; since you seem to be a person that know how to be civil, I shall*
lend

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lend an ear to your Consequence and Deduction.

Vic. With leave then from your Worship, it is this, that if you are bound to observe your ancient Customs (because (as you say) you are sworn to their observation) much more are you obliged to punish Vice, and unlawful Assemblies, whether of riotous persons in the Vulgar notion, or of Non-conformists in a new dress, because you are sworn to that too.

Ald. *Did not I first severely admonish you, that your speech should be without reflections; and that your care should be great that you did not blemish the glory of our Corporation; and on this condition I would hear your Doctrine, if you would permit me to make mine own use of it?*

Vic. All this (if it shall please your good Worship) shall be readily granted ; nor do I think I have yet broken the Laws of our Discourse ; for I have cordially expressed my self, in relation to the honour of the Corporation, and I shall still leave you to make what use you shall think fit of my Debate ; but Justice I hope (with which I know your sage head, like a Gold Ring, is sufficiently enamell'd) will plead with you for a proportionable, though not equal, Latitude :

Latitude : and you will give me leave to make
some use of your Doctrine.

Ald. *I see 'tis in vain any longer to restrain you, for you will tell truth in the face of the Sun: Draw what Consequence you will from me, but I'll assure you I will withdraw my Purse from you.*

Vic. I am sorry I must disoblige your Worship so far ; for indeed, to say truth, you were the best Friend I have in the Town ; I had two Shillings a year from you duly divided into half-yearly payments, besides oftentimes free access to your Table ; but if I must forfeit this for performance of my duty, I shall never offer my Sacred Function at such a Shrine, nor sacrifice truth upon a Silver Altar : I must plainly tell you then, you seem to me, from your own discourse, to have brought upon your self the most heinous and abominable sin of Perjury.

Ald. O abomination ! as I am an Alderman, and thereby a person of honour ; You are worse than all that were here before you, I never heard such a rude and wicked word come from a Ministers mouth before.

Vic. That perhaps may be the reason, why
you do no better understand it.

Ald. God Almighty give me patience;
surely, if you are not more modest in your
D department,

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deportment, I shall be forced to call for a Sergeant.

Vic. If your Worship want any thing, I am here ready to attend upon you; but I beseech you, Sir, be not angry with your own Conviction; for perhaps God Almighty may make me instrumental, not only to discover your guilt, but, upon your repentance, to provide a remedy.

Ald. I am glad to hear, that you have Cordials about you, as well as Purgations; for truly this is strange Physick you are now administering; nor am I yet satisfied that my wound is of that kind which you would apply your Plaister to; or at least not so deep as you make it. Do you think then that we are bound to keep all the Oaths that we have taken?

Vic. No, Sir, I am so far from yielding to such conjectures, that there are several Oaths, that you and many of your Brethren have taken, that have so torn and vacated both the Kings Prerogative, and the Subjects Priviledges (which are then only preserved and safe, when both are inviolated) that I should be no less treacherous to my Prince, than a publick Adversary to mine own Interest, should I in the least concede their Obligation.

Ald. Pray, Sir, what are those; for you
see

seem now to load us with a strange imputation?

Vic. I do not at all presume to burden your Worship with any guilt, which your own Actions have not contracted; but out of tender respect to that Soul of yours, which is now legally committed to my care and charge, I would endeavour to convince you of the hainousness of your Crimes: that so, if possible, your tears may quench that fiery zeal, that proved an Incendiary to the whole Nation, and burned our peace and plenty into ashes; that your repentance may be as solemn, as that League which caused your guilt.

Ald. Truly, Conscience (which is the little God within us, and does more sometimes than Swords and Armies) is certainly so prevalent and powerful, that it will make baseness put on confidence, and will speak sometimes though to the temporal detriment of him that owns it, though there be great disproportion betwixt the Discourfers; and therefore let me for once be so patient as to hear the Accusation you have against me, and my Brethren, whilst I deny my self so far, as to lay aside all Grandeur and State, and become your quiet (though, I hope, I shall be unconcerned) Auditor: Tell me plainly those particular Oaths

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that you think we are not bound to keep.

Vic. I suppose, Sir, you will be so good a Christian, as to be willing to attend to what may be a means of conviction, and ease you of some of those seeming Obligations which a great many account Sacred, and Solemn, especially since you appear willing to disburden your self, even in those things (by your omissions) where your own power cannot disengage. Those Oaths and Vows then, which I suppose you are not obliged to keep, are these three: The Solemn League and Covenant, the Negative Oath, and the Engagement; as too many that may be more private, let them still remain, as they had their first Sanction private betwixt God and your own Conscience.

Ald. But bare assertion is no proof; you have seen how many consciencious, and, what is more, wealthy men too, have departed from their Authority, and Honour in this, and several other Corporations, because they cou'd not permit themselves to deny but one of those Oaths, you mentioned, to be Obligatory and binding.

Vic. I have learned, Sir, to distinguish betwixt Interest and Conscience; and therefore cannot but hint some by-ends (more prevalent usually with such kind of men than

than the sincerity of their Religion) which they may at least be supposed to aim at, rather than the preservation of their Consciences without wound, or the keeping their Principles disintangled from Error.

Ald. I cannot imagine what those may be, since those that are arrived at our Grandeur, had rather part with any thing, than their Gowns, and will sacrifice any thing to their Honour and Authority.

Vic. Any thing, Sir, but their own Interest: but since you think men can so well live by an airy name, I see no reason why you may not entertain in your belief, that those men who forsook their interest in Corporations, because they would not renounce the Covenant, might but only change one sort of Honour, for what they thought another, and so the ambitious humour might still be fed.

Ald. I cannot imagine what honour can be more pleasing, than that which our Corporation gives; for here we are respected almost to Adoration, and our Acts of Justice are without controule; nor need we take much pains (like other Magistrates in the Country) to be learned in the Law, since we usually make the Customs of our Town (though they may sometimes interfere with the Book of Statutes) the

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Rule and Measure of all our Actions. And then Ile tell you one private Principle, that we keep unto our selves (and I hope you will not dare to tell it abroad) we commonly punish only poor men, that are not able to make an appeal, for 'tis absolutely requisite, that men in our places should be great Politicians.

*Vic. I am loath to adventure the discovery of so much confidence, as to tell you, that this last Item proclaims you kind to Egyptian Task-masters, as much as your forlorn Companions deserting their share and interest in Authority, smells strong of Onions and Garlick : But although you are so well pleased with your honour, you being Gods (as you say) that are adored, yet it seems your desertors forsook your Mace, and
✱ Scarlet too, rather than to reject their Covenant.*

Ald. That were only those that were so squemish, as to make their Interest stoop to Conscience.

Vic. I should think rather that their Conscience here stooped to Interest.

Ald. How so ?

Vic. Because they had a threefold Cord, which was represented in the Covenant, that bound them sufficiently to what they did (though perhaps Cords might have been employed

employed to a better use about them.) First, By their denial of that renunciation, they gained more honour and repute amongst their own Party (which (in the Language they threaten the Nation with) are numerous and momentous) than they could possibly lose in deserting you. Secondly, Hereby they are freed (together with the honour) from the charge and burden of Publick Offices ; which well suits with that beloved Covetousness, that most of that Party are qualified withal. And, lastly, they still enjoy all the benefits, not only of Common Townsmen, but of Burgeses too, and lose nothing, but charge and burden, which they endeavour perpetually to avoid.

Ald. Truly in this, you have told me more than ever I thought of before ; though no question but I had it in my mind, because my assent to it is so quickly gained. But methinks, they, being now in so good a condition, should not attempt, what we daily fear, an alteration of the Government.

Vic. Were they men that would but allow natural Deductions from rational Principles (as they will not, for that they decry reason as carnal) I could easily, from this, demonstrate, that they must offer violence to their own Faculties, when ever

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they attempt an alteration or change.

Ald. Pray do it then for my use (for it is no absurdity for the greatest Politician to hear advice, though perhaps at last he will make use of his own) that so I may not joyn with them again, to the prejudice of my Faculties too.

Vic. You know, Sir, that your Worship, who has been so good to me, may command any thing from me again ; and therefore I shall not at all refuse to remember you, of what it would be arrogance to pretend an information ; That whosoever attempts the alteration of any Government, it is upon assurance, or at least presumption, that the constituting of another becomes his particular Interest, and that it will be better with him under that Authority he endeavours to introduce, than it is at present under that which has the immediate sway. But now these persons, that we are discoursing of, cannot place themselves in those Circumstances wherein they shall be freer from trouble, or enjoy themselves, or their Estates with less noise, or burden, than in that Condition in which they now are ; and therefore it must needs be an unreasonable attempt, for this Party to endeavour an alteration of Affairs.

Ald. I

Ald. *I understand the general drift of your Argument; and you know the old Saying, A word to a wise man is enough. But methoughts I heard you offering at something but now, to prove to me that those three Oaths, mentioned by you, and taken by me, and my Brethren, do not oblige; and I the rather mind you of this promise, because Oaths are such burdensome things, that (though I shall not so far depart from my Religion, as with the Anabaptist, and Quaker, to deny the taking of any Oaths) I would be eased of the performance of them.* 3. O.

Vic. I guess that by your Worships actions, and therefore shall, by Gods Grace, set your Worship at liberty from those three; but perhaps that may make way for the Obligation of others.

Ald. *Well, Sir, I am willing to adventure that, though, to tell truth, I liked those three, better than some that I have taken since.*

Vic. I am sorry your Worship has yet any kindness for *Bell and the Dragon*, which (besides that, they are now generally looked upon as Apocryphal) have devoured the substance of three Kingdoms; and than which, I think, there were never more impious, and unlawful Impositions.

Ald. *But*

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Ald. *But how do they appear to be such deformed and affrighting Monsters?*

Vic. To float in generals, were to adventure your Worship in a broad and dangerous Sea, in a little Boat, without Sails or Oars; and might argue me (what I never was) a cunning Sophister, rather than a rational and fair Discourser. I must therefore first single mine Adversaries, that so encountering them, I may with the greater facility prove a Conquerour.

Ald. *If you perform what you promise, truly you shall have my vote for a better living; not only because the sight of you will alwaies put me in mind of my Gullt, and so detract from the pleasure of my life, but also for your own advantage, that a contracted maintenance may no longer hinder the enlargement of your knowledge.*

Vic. I thank your Worship for your respects, both to your self, and me; and shall, with your good leave, immediately draw up an Indictment against the Covenant.

Ald. *Pray, Sir, be as brief as you can, or otherwise our Dinner may give an Interruption to your discourse.*

Vic. I shall not then take it asunder, although there is in almost every bush a Thief,
and

and under every hedge an Ambuscado ; but shall endeavour to rout the main body, and then the smaller Parties will separate of themselves. The Covenant then is not only to be renounced, but abhorred by all the peaceable Professors of Christianity. First, Because it is quite opposite to our natural Allegiance to our King, by vertue of which we are obliged, to preserve his Royal Person, against, not only Private Insurrections at home, but, Publick Enemies abroad ; and not to make our selves Judges of his Actions so far, as, with limitation and condition, only to defend and preserve his Royal Person and Authority, so far as his shall conserve and defend the true Religion and Liberties of the Kingdoms, as in the third Article of the Solemn League: For if this Latitude be given to the Subjects of any Prince, his Religion and Actions must of necessity be arraigned at the private Bars of those Subjects, that are most inferiour, as well as those that attend more immediately upon the Throne ; and every particular must plead a lawful and sufficient excuse for withdrawing from the preservation of his Prince, if he shall, either through Ignorance, or Interest, conjecture, that the King does not preserve the true Religion, or the Laws and Liberties

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Liberties of the Kingdom ; which what they are, is still left to the rashness, or indiscretion of every ignorant and illiterate head. This sets the Subject above his Prince, and loosens and overthrows the very Foundations. Nature it self, and that Subjection which reason (without the Obligation of an Oath) sufficiently enforces, must needs teach us the bold impieties of such an Oath, that will banish Order out of the World ; and lay open Gods Anointed, whom he has consecrated his Delegate, to every bold usurping Traytor, that will at any time adventure to drench a Crown in its own gore.

Ald. I easily see your first Pass made at the Covenant, which seems to have given it some wound. Let us see also your second assault.

Vic. I am glad to see your Worship so chearful at the wound of such a Friend ; I was afraid you would have wept for it now, since, I know, you shed drops of blood for it formerly.

*Ald. That was in my younger years, when bleeding was as necessary as my Victuals ; I did only, as some are wont to do at the Universities, when you have a great Creation of Graduates, or when a multitude of Knights are Dabbed on a day set apart on purpose, run in
among*

among the Herd. But pray, Mr. Vicar, you promised some more reasons.

Vic. I thank you, Sir, for your recalling of a wandering thought. The second Argument I have learned against the Covenant, is, That it is contrary to the Prerogative of Kings, not only appropriate to them under the Old Testament, but also, as soon as they became Christian, under the New; that is, to have the power of reforming Religion in their own hands; and this was sufficiently expressed in the Oath of Supremacy (which I question not but that you had before taken) where the King's Majesty is acknowledged, and under the most Sacred Obligation owned, the Supreme Ruler and Moderator of the Kingdom, governing all Persons and Causes Ecclesiastical and Civil: And not only so, but you added an Oath to confirm and make your promise Sacred and Inviolable, to defend and preserve, as much as in you lay, his Jurisdictions, Priviledges, Præeminencies, and Authorities whatsoever, either granted and commended to the trust and managery of the Kings Majesty, or else joyned and annexed to the Imperial Crown of this Kingdom. Part of which, there is none that understands any thing of the State of his Country, or Religion, but immediately
reckons

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reckons Spiritual, or Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, for correction and amendment of all Errors, and abuses in Church Affairs. To enter therefore into a League and Covenant, contradicting and violating a former Oath, that plucked also a choice Jewel out of our Sovereigns Crown, and entrenched upon his Royal Prerogative, is an Action to be abandoned by Mankind, and damned to that place, to which, it is to be feared, it has condemned many a Promoter.

Ald. These methinks are hard words, and were it not a derogation to my Honour, and a blemish upon my Grandeur, I could almost be sorry, and sigh for my taking it; But I hope, as I was saying but now, I shall pass still among the Herd.

Vic. Truly, Sir, without repentance, it must be amongst the Goats then; and I would advise you (and if in any thing I may inform, then in this) to be serious, where Eternity will be the measure either of your bliss or misery: Will you be pleased that I shall proceed to the third reason?.

Ald. Yes, to any thing, so as I may be rid of those I have already heard.

Vic. Then, thirdly, your Worship must easily grant, that it was not imposed by a sufficient

sufficient power. For an Oath cannot lawfully be taken by a person subject to another, in relation to those particulars in which his subjection is due, or to constitute any thing, or confirm it, by such a Solemn Sanction, concerning those matters in which he is lawfully subjected, without the leave and permission of his Superiour. First, Because in this he does an injury to another, and obliges himself to injustice by an Oath; because he determines, and disposes of those matters, and affairs, that are totally dependent upon anothers Commands. And, Secondly, because every one, in those things in which he is subjected to a Superiour, is bound to attend and obey his Will, and be passive only in relation unto his disposal, to whom he has been obliged, either by Nature, Contract, or a precedent Oath; which no subsequent can disanul. And though these Reasons are ponderous enough to weigh down whatever can be produced to the contrary; yet, if you try them by the weights of the Sanctuary, you will not find a grain deficient. For the thirtieth of *Numbers* is, throughout the whole, a compleat confirmation of this particular; where if a woman, remaining in her Fathers House, whilest she is under his tuition
and

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and Government, vow a Vow unto God, and bind her self by a most Sacred Bond; that Bond and Vow, though never so solemn, was to be null, and void, if her Father disallowed it.

Ald. *But the Holy League (I hope) was no such thing, that was cloathed with such unluckie Circumstances.*

Vic. Yes, Sir, that it was; For, first, the King not only disallowed, but protested against it, so far was he from giving it the least Contenance, or Sanction: And had he indeed consented to that, he knew he should seale his own ruine, as well as violate his Coronation Oath, and make a Deed of Gift of all his Prerogative.

Ald. *Then it seems this was a Net that would have entangled and caught both King and Subject.*

Vic. It was a Net, Sir, that was fit to fish with in troubled waters, for had not the Rivers been stained with blood, and the Clouds of Heaven, as well as the Mud of the Earth, darkned the Waters, it is impossible that so much fish should have come to net; the Web being so monstrously big, that all that had eyes would have seen the Snare: but so it was, that it had fatal Circumstances attending it, that it might prove a ruine to
such

such a People that were out of love with their own beauty, murmured and repined at their own plenty, and were willing to abandon their blessings and felicity.

Ald. Well, Sir; I have no reason to say much against what you reply; but I can bear witness to the Old Proverb, that it was good fishing in troubled waters: But pray make good your second particular, that the matter of the Covenant was not within our own power.

Vic. That I shall make good to your Worship too. But, first, I must take notice by the by, that your Worship would make a good Pope; for that you have, I perceive, got a special Argument to prove your self St. Peters Successour, because you have catched such fish as brought money in their mouths.

Ald. I tell you, Sir, I had rather have my Shop full of them, than of Red Herrings.

Vic. Well, there's salt however in a Red Herring, but I never knew your Worship so covetous before; however let us throw aside the fish for the present, and take up the Net. The matter of the Covenant was not within your own power, because those very things which you Covenanted to alter and extirpate, and what you swore to
E defend

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defend and maintain, were all contrary to that duty and subjection which before, both by Birth, and Oaths, you owed to his Majesty.

Ald. *How so?*

Vic. But that I must allow to your Worship the infirmities of Old Age, and account your memory as short as your days: I could else tell you that, but just now, it was plainly evinced, to be quite opposite to our Natural Obligations, to our Oaths of Allegiance, and Supremacy, and not only tended to the diminution, but the total destruction of the Kings Prerogative.

Ald. *You are something zealous in your cause, Mr. Vicar.*

Vic. Not so zealous as your Worship was formerly in yours, my Zeal is neither so hot, as to boyle over into raging fury, nor yet so blind, as not to see its own Object; and yet I hope I shall obtain your Worships pardon, if so much discourse begins to make me a little warm.

Ald. *I hope this Town stands in an Air that is able to cool you; and therefore pray make your last particular a little plainer.*

Vic. I shall chearfully undertake that task, and I most humbly thank your Worship for your patience; You know, omitting the

the Proem, and Conclusion, the Covenant consisted of six Articles. Every one of which is quite opposite to that obedience, you before were engaged for to his Majesty; besides the forfeiture of that Religion your Fore-fathers died for.

Ald. I would fain hear this proved.

Vic. That you shall certainly, Sir, without injury to any thing but your own patience. As to your Religion, the two first Articles do so palpably offer violence to that, it not only demolishing the present structure of our most famous Churches, but utterly extirpating that pious and most ancient Order of Bishops; (without which some doubt whether the Christian Church can have its being) and by this means leaving us, as much as in it lies, without any future hopes of a true Priesthood.

Ald. But how does it oppugne that obedience that we were before engaged to perform to his Majesty ?

Vic. That your Worship may with great facility discern; when you shall consider, that you were before obliged to preserve and defend, not only his Majesties Person, but also all his Præeminencies, and Prerogative; part of which is, notoriously known to be, Ecclesiastical as well as Civil Government,

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and consequently the power of reforming Religion; and therefore the offering at an Alteration without him, attempts the destruction of that blessed mixture, that, Lawyers inform us, is in his Person, and violates his Royal Prerogative; besides the diminution of his Revenue, by abolishing of the Hierarchy, from whose First-fruits and Tenth he reaps no small advantage; nay, finally, it makes part of a Parliament contradict and abrogate, what the whole had before, by several Acts, and Statutes, established, fixing Prelacy by Laws that cannot justly be repealed: by a power less than what at first established it.

Ald. *Truly, I did not think so much could have been said against what carried such specious pretenses; but it seems there lodged a Snake in the midst of those sweet herbs. Pray, Sir, proceed to your reflections upon those other Articles that remain unconsidered.*

Vic. I would not have your Worship to conjecture, that my discourse will be so much as a Breviate and Epitome of what many persons have writ in Folio; For there have scarce been more hunters of the Beast in the *Revelation* (whose exact number a melancholly person once found out in the words of
the



the Covenant) than there has been of this Scotch Monster ; however, that we may see also how great friends they are to his Majesty, we need travel no further than the third Article, which engages us to preserve the Kings Person, only in the conservation of true Religion, and the Liberties of the Kingdom ; which laies him open (as I hinted before) to every Traytor or Enthusiast, that has, either malice, or, madness enough to conclude him an enemy to both, or either : But (what may be worth your observation) in the same Article, in which the preservation of the King's naked Person, stripped of all his Royal Prerogative, is limited, care is taken, that the Priviledges of Parliament, and the Liberty of the People be strictly maintained, without an interpretation or restriction at all ; which loudly proclaimes to the whole World what friendship this League designed for his Majesty.

Ald. Methinks I begin to withdraw my affection from that which I had once a kindness for ; and I fear this wound to his Sacred Majesty, was but a kind of Prologue to that Tragedy that succeeded it.

Vic. Although I cannot but very much rejoyce, to see your Worship consuming that

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And with your Judgment, which the Penalty of a Law then only seemed to extort; to wit, the renunciation of the Covenant: Yet I shall further, I hope, enhance your abhorrence of this strange Beast, no less than confirm your last consequence and deduction; when I shall remember you, that the next Article (besides that it assumes a most Absolute, Tyrannical, and Arbitrary Power, in bringing men to what we know not who shall deem condign punishment) does countenance and encourage (and not only so, but bind men by the Solemnity of an Oath) to Parricide, Regicide, and any the greatest Villanies in the World. How easie was it by vertue of that for Husbands to ease themselves of unpleasant Wives, or Wives to divorce themselves from those Husbands that they found their affections, either out of wantonness, or curiosity, to decline from? How easie a way was this for the Son to enquire into his Fathers years, before nature gave period to his life; that so he might be the present Possessour of what he was only heir to before? Nay, for the Subjects to arraign and condemn their Prince (since it was without respect of persons) could they but once affix the Title of Incendiary, Malignant, or obstructor of the Reformed Religion upon

upon him? The definition of each particular of which was left in their own breasts to inspire.

Ald. These Inferences cannot methinks but startle all us that have swallowed down such poyson; the regret that is in my Conscience makes me sit very uneasie.

Vic. I could willingly allow my self, as well as you, a breathing time; were it not for fear that what I have all this time pursued, would be too long at rest, and recover strength.

Ald. Nay, I would not have you, by any means, give an interruption to your discourse; for I have already given order that they should not expect us at Dinner, but provide some repast for us against the Evening.

Vic. I thank your good Worship, not only for your patient condescension, in admitting so much familiarity all this while, but for your great care both of your self and me; though indeed I should not alwaies be so bold an Intruder.

Ald. He never intrudes that is invited, Bagpipes (you know) will not go at all, if they are quite empty.

Vic. I thank you, Sir, for that Metaphor; for nothing but that could so well have reminded me of the Covenant: We have

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already dispatched half the Articles, and condemned one more to make them even; and the fifth is nothing but talking of Peace in the midst of War, and boasting of strange effects of reconciliation, when all know there was no such thing, and therefore here the failing of the Saints was superadded to the Perjury of the Sinner. And finally, as to the Sixth Article, it only supposes, in general terms, what we have already refused in particular; that the cause of this Covenant was the defence of Religion, together with the Liberty and Peace of the Kingdoms, that the whole tended to the glory of God, the Publick Advantage, and the Kings Honour; and therefore the Jurors here swore to remain constant in the pursuit of the Design against all opposition throughout the whole course of their lives: Thus did it not only ensnare a Nation with good words, to dig out their own Bowels, to rage against Nature it self, and sheath their Swords in their nearest Relations, to pull down and ruine the most glorious Church in the whole World, and force it to be truly Militant; but (what may supperadd the Complement to all its deformed dashes) it made the King a Slave to his Subjects, divested him of all his Royal Robes, and made him sacrifice his
Head

Head to preserve his Crown, which it would also have deprived him of, but that his Martyrdom eternized it.

Ald. *Why, do you think then that the Covenant murdered the late King of ever blessed memory?*

Vic. No, Sir, I should be strangely uncivil if I should draw such Conclusions, for in that your Worship would be concerned; but this I shall be bold to say, That the threefold Cord tied him to the Block, and left him there for another Party to cut off his head. But I expected your Worship should, after all this digression, have required me to discover the strength of the Argument by reducing the whole to some short Form.

Ald. *Truly, that being usually Mr. Mayors work when we, by chance, debate of any thing, I think the length of our discourse had made me almost forget where I was, and so expected that should be the work of another; contenting my self with a serious reflection upon what you have already said; but now my memory is a little awaked, I must call upon you to discover to me the force of this third Argument.*

Vic. If it shall please your Worship it is briefly this. That Oath which was not imposed

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imposed by a sufficient power, was not lawful: But the Covenant was not imposed by a sufficient power, *Ergo*, &c.

Ald. *But how has that last Clause been proved?*

Vic. That has been thus evinced, because the King had no share in the imposition, but protested against it: And we, being his Subjects, cannot enter into a League without him, so much especially to the prejudice and detriment of his Prerogative, and our own Priviledges as this is, and by a dissection of the Covenant it has particularly appeared; I shall add this too, as a final Supplement to this third Argument; that this Oath was not imposed by that which the very Imposers declared to be sufficient Authority; nay, not by that which was pretended most for its enforcement, to wit, Parliamentary Authority: For then it should have been by a Statute, but this could not possibly be obtained when neither the King, nor Bishops, nor many other of both Houses, would at all be present, or consent to it; and so it becomes notoriously repugnant to the Petition of Right, no less than to an antecedent Protestation, besides the Obligations before mentioned; sufficient to vacat what a great many have thought an Obligation, since
this

this Covenant obliges to nothing but Repentance.

Ald. *Well, Sir, that you may hasten to a new Theam (for I am sufficiently informed of the unlawfulness of this Oath, and therefore shall not only beg forgiveness and pardon from Almighty God, but endeavour to avoid such snares for the time to come) Have you any thing more that you would add upon this head?*

Vic. I am glad to hear your Worship of such a pious and Christian temper, to yield to a Conviction, and not be ashamed to confess guilt, and beg pardon, where Reason and Conscience discovers an offence. I shall add no more therefore to enforce your Conviction, but only mind you of one thing, which you may, your self, at your next perusal observe in the Covenant, and that is, the Amphibologies, and Equivocation. So that it is clear to me, that it was at first Sathans work; it is so like the Answers of the Delphick Oracle, which were alwaies capable of a double interpretation, that so, if any thing should happen to the detriment of one, they might have another ready to preserve its reputation.

Ald. *Though I was alwaies tender of the Reputation of the Corporation, of which I have the honour to be not one of the least Members;*
and

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and therefore according to my duty withstand any thing that may be derogatory to our Grandeur: Yet God forbid, that I should endeavour to establish Iniquity either by Authority, or Law; and so far shut mine eyes against the light of the Sun, as not to acknowledge those beams of Conviction that are at any time darted into my Conscience: I am heartily sorry, that either the love of Faction, and change of that Religion which I now perceive to be ancient and good, or the covetous preservation of my Estate, have formerly prevailed so far with me as to cause me to espouse such a quarrel as was neither advantageous to the Publick, or safe for mine own Conscience; and that the same Principles should ever be so prevalent, as to cause me thus, not only to take an unlawful Oath, but, to seal my Obligation to the League and Covenant with manifest Perjury, and breach of all my former Oaths; but I hope I shall, by my future Loyalty, testify my Repentance both to God, and man; and by a double diligence redeem that faithfulness and reputation which by my rash Acts I have formerly forfeited. I thank God I have renounced the Covenant, and would with all my heart forswear it too.

Vic. Truly, Sir, I had not drawn on your Worship to so large a discourse about this
great

great Dagon, which is now fallen, but that I had (as I have great reason both from mine own Office and your Kindness) a cordial respect to your future welfare, that you might have true Peace of Conscience here, and everlasting bliss in the World to come.

Ald. I must needs confess, I wonder you would adventure so close a thrust at the body of the Town, considering upon what terms you stand, and how fickle the affections of those persons usually are, who have thus their Minister for the most part at their own beck: But truly, Sir, I shall further evidence my conviction to be cordially entertained, and my Repentance to be true, and real, by respecting you much more, for that you deny all interest for the preservation of a good Conscience, which, you know is a continual feast, and the richest Treasure we can possess. I like your discourse so well, that I must beg the favour from you to go on to the discovery of those blemishes that are visible in those other entanglements, to wit, the Negative Oath, and the Engagement.

Vic. That, Sir, I shall willingly do, not only to evidence to your good Worship, that there is nothing you shall command, which is within my power to perform, but I will
with

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with all chearfulness and resolution undertake it : but because their Villany does not lye covered with briars and thorns, as this of the Covenant did ; but as Rebellion gained strength, and had Victory and Success to encourage and embolden it, so it came abroad and discovered it self to the credulous multitude, without Mask or Vail ; and so exhibited its gasty countenance to be exactly delineated and proportioned, by those that did not take *Hecuba* for *Helen*, and so far retained their own Reason, as to refuse to be in love with deformity.

Ald. Methinks, in mine own view, I foresee that many of those Arguments against the Covenant, will hold good against these Oaths too ; and therefore, to contract our discourse what we can, I hope you will trust me with the urging those to mine own Conscience, that we may avoid all vain repetitions.

Vic. Your Worship need not fear my Civility in this respect, our discourse upon these will be brief enough, since to a blind man they will almost appear at first rehearsal totally to subvert and destroy Monarchy, taking it away both Root and Branch. First, as to the Negative Oath, wherein you
N:O: swore neither directly nor indirectly to adhere

here to, or assist, in that present War, either his Majesty, or any other Forces, raised by any Power whatsoever without the Authority of both Houses of Parliament; and that you would wholly be within the power and disposal of the Parliament. What did this but plainly contradict both your Oath of Allegiance, and natural duty that you owed unto the King? And therefore you cannot but deem your selves Traitors and Rebels to his Majesty, as far as you abetted, or assisted any against him. And if we superadd the Engagement to this Negative Oath, we shall easily see how Villany and Regicide crept on by degrees, untill it had arrived at that height from whence it might command, and enslave a Nation. You first covenanted to lay open his Majesty to every bold and bloody Traitor, whilest you would preserve and defend him no longer, than you had a mind to think him a Defender of the Faith, and, what you should think, the Priviledges of Parliament, and Liberties of the Kingdom. Thus did you exalt your selves above your Prince, and make him a Slave to your wills, exposing him publickly, and that by a Combination, to all the hazards and cruelty, of malice or misfortune. Then least his Crown and Life should
be

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be too safe in such generals, and all his Subjects should not be alike visited with the same Vertigo, but might have their souls at liberty from Enthusiasm, and Zeal boyled to rage and madness; and, consequently, might judge his Majesty both a Defender of the true faith, and a constant Maintainer of the Subjects Priviledge, as well as his own Prerogative; It was thought good, by those godly Designers of his slaughter and butchery, to oblige the People to a closer invasion of his Life and Fortunes, by denying him the assistance of their own; that so being left naked to himself, his Adversaries might easily bring him to their Demands, that at last they might offer his Crown and Revenues to their Covetousness and Lust; and sacrifice his Bloud to those infernal Gods, that had vouchsafed their assistance in so glorious a Reformation. And finally, when this witnessing time was come, that being free from the noise of Drum and Trumpet they might serve themselves in their Generation; That there might no opportunity remain for the dead Ghost to terrifie and affrighten, or the living Posterity to demand or regain their own; you were all engaged to be true and faithful to the Government that was then established without

without either King or House of Lords.

Ald. Certainly, Sir, if we had either seen, or suspected so much villany, we should neuer have swallowed such strange Oaths.

Vic. The best use that your Worship can make of it now, is (next to your repentance, and resolution of Loyalty) to see what an inextricable Labyrinth of Vice and Misery we slip into, for want of due consideration: Rashness and inadvertency, as they damn many an immortal Soul, so do they waste and consume our Estates and Welfare in this World. But that no intermediate discourse may give an interruption to our present Scrutiny, and obstruct the discovery of the horrid Impiety and most scandalous Perjury of those who took these Oaths; I must further inform you that in these Oaths, first, the Oaths both of Allegiance and Supremacy were most blasphemously violated, by an Obligation (for so I call these improperly) that quite contradicted and destroyed their very intent, and the design for which they were first invented. Secondly, By these latter Oaths; even the Covenant it self in the third Article (which was accounted so Sacred and Solemn, and, even to this day, is made an holy Cheat, and religious Garment,

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to hide Treachery and Rebellion under) is so notoriously and publicly violated, and broken, that I cannot but wonder, that any man who has taken the Engagement, should have the confidence to assert his duty to keep the Covenant Sacred. Thirdly, They are opposite to the Liberty of the Subject, in that they were imposed without a Law. And (lastly) they were the most bloody and scandalous reproach that ever was to the Protestant Religion ; to reform our selves by Sacrilege and Perjury, to blaspheme God for his honour and glory, to enslave a Prince to his Subjects Lust, and cut off his head to make him glorious, to pull down Altars that we might offer Sacrifice, and demolish Temples, to say our Prayers ; And finally, to root out, and for ever extirpate what Nature, and Piety, besides Philosophy and long Experience, had convinced us to be the best Government in the World.

Tantum religio, &c.

*And could Religion all this mischief bring
To wicked Subjects and a gracious King ?*

*Ald. I see, Sir, you begin to be transported,
and therefore I must put a period to this
Argument,*

Argument, both because I am abundantly satisfied, as to the unlawfulness of these Oaths (and I pray God forgive me not only these rash and unadvised Acts, but my manifest Perjury) and also because I would gladly make some farther enquiry into other particulars.

Vic. But, before we yet depart from our present station; I would entreat you fully to disburden your Conscience of whatever you have formerly received, that might fortifie and strengthen the belief you had of the Obligation of those forementioned Oaths.

Ald. Truly, Sir, I have not commonly used myself unto too many Scruples, my Trade engaging me to heavier weights: nor had a Tradesman need have his Conscience very strait and full, that does not intend to have his purse empty.

Vic. Though your Worships Trade be more large and great, than to be very strict in Weights and Measures; and I know that Conscience, and its Owners Purse are oft-times, not only more alike than you seem to make them, but, in some things the very same, and as much kin, as *Hippocrates's* Twins, not only partake of each others Passions, but open and shut both together; and

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all the Difference is only this, that here the Purse is the Elder Brother, to whom the other serves and obeys : Yet Justice to your self is exact to a Scruple.

Ald. You seem now to be chearful again, if you suffer the air thus to get into your brain, it may, perchance, breed some worms.

Vic. Truly, I did it, only to please your Worship, and I thought it was the ancient Custome of the Town, for the Minister to go behind, and follow the Aldermen ; your own Example, and Rule too, I hope, cannot be any prejudice to you. But yet if the air be got into my brains, I shall give it such speedy and quick vent in the answer to your Objections (which I now humbly wait and expect) that there shall not be age enough for putrefaction.

Ald. Though I never was bred to Logick, and Philosophy, yet every man has something natural ; and therefore I must take upon me to tell you, that though (I thank God) I am fully convinced that I offended my Maker, and broke my Allegiance in taking those Oaths ; yet I see no reason why I should yield to the truth of this, that an antecedent Oath must needs vacat all that are subsequent.

*Vic. I am very glad to hear your Worship still persist in that resolution to repent
however*

however of the taking of those Oaths; I question not, but that you will, within a few minutes, as cordially, and as readily conclude, that there is no Obligation can rest upon you, or any other of his Majesties Subjects, to observe all, or part of either, by vertue of any of those impositions.

Ald. Truly, Sir, you never found me an enemy unto Reason, though I know, in these things of divine concernment, it has been looked upon as carnal.

Vic. Reason was so carnal, that spiritual men made as much use of it as their parts and Enthusiasm would permit; only, because for most of their attempts and actions, they had little or no reason at all; we cannot well blame them for decrying that, which they saw became so great an obstructor of their procedure: However I shall adventure to give you some Argument, why a former Oath, legally taken, whose matter was also just and lawful, must of necessity vacat the Obligation of any that shall, through Impiety, or Surreption, be future, and succeed, which bears any opposition to the former.

Ald. Pray do that, Sir, and then the application to the matter in hand will not be difficult.

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Vic. Really, Sir, this debt is so easily acquitted, that your Worship shall demand it no more: For the Case is plain at the first proposal, and needs no more than its own Explication. If the former Oath be in all things lawful, and fails neither in matter nor Circumstances; whatever is admitted opposite to this is *eo nomine* unlawful, and consequently has no force or Obligation.

Ald. Though I have no great reason to complain of my want of understanding, yet really, Sir, I do not perfectly apprehend your Argument.

Vic. That seems to me to be very strange, and yet I have no more reason to be concerned for that you apprehend not my way of arguing, than I have to disturb my self for that many times I understand not your way of Justice. But that I may leave no obscurity in my Phrase, I must still insist that a subsequent Oath contradicting a former, which was lawfully imposed, and good, both in matter and circumstances, must either be unlawful, or else the two terms of a contradiction may be both true; and so, lawful and unlawful become reconciled; or if this be still to you a demonstration of *ignotum per ignotius*, I can otherwise enforce the Proposition.

Ald. But

Ald. But before you do that, let me remember you of one thing that I am sure is omitted, that must a little limit your assertion, which seems to me to be too general.

Vic. Pray, Sir, what is that?

Ald. It is most certain, that an Oath may be taken that is contrary to a former, and yet be Obligatory; As for Example: There was an Act (you know) made against the Fanaticks, whose power was to expire at three years end; now all those that by their Oath or Office were obliged to execute that Law, if at the three years end a Law should have been made opposite to the former, they might lawfully swear to the execution of this opposite Law, and this latter Oath would oblige.

Vic. Your Worships discourse is now fallacious (and I hope you will pardon the Expression because it is a term of Art) were the Laws both running together, and the former not limited by a time, that took off the Obligation of the former Oath, the latter Oath would have been so far from accomplishing that end, that it must therefore have been unlawful, because repugnant to the former Obligation: but now the former Obligation being ceased, because the matter of it was already vacated, and the Bond was but for a certain time; and the same

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Power, that by Enacting the Law, brought it within the limits of the Executors Oath, did now void it by the expiration of its Authority, and consequently vacated so much of the general Oath as related to that particular Law.

Ald. Well, Sir, I apprehend the resolution of this doubt: but as to your general Proposition, that a latter Oath cannot make void the Obligation to a former, if the former were lawful, and has the reason of its Bond still remaining; I cannot yet apprehend your proof, but must expect some Argument that may evince it to mine own capacity.

*Vic. I heartily thank your Worship that you will not permit any promise of mine to remain unpaid, and I hope I shall have the same Act of Justice performed to me. The reason to be added then was this; Because a latter Oath, opposite and repugnant to a former, binds me to what is *de jure* impossible: For having obliged my self by my former Bond, that must in equity be discharged; now to bind my self, by a subsequent Oath, to what is destructive of this former Bond, obstructs and hinders, nay (should it be obligatory) for ever prohibits the performance of my precedent promise, and consequently brings upon me the guilt of Perjury,*
for

for not discharging my antecedent Obligations. Thus, Sir, the taking an Oath contrary to a former, is the same with those that enter into Oaths for the performance of those things, in respect of which they are subject to another, and so are not within their own power; which all reason at first Audit will proclaim and publish both null and void.

Ald. In my Judgment, you have in this, an unfortunate way of explaining your self; or else long audience and discourse have dulled my judgment and apprehension: Methinks hitherto I have understood you well, but in this you seem too obscure.

Vic. I have more charity, and confidence in your Worship, than to conjecture that you shelter something of strange design under the pretense of ignorance and defect of satisfaction; will you be pleased to exercise your patience in a little more attention to this thing?

Ald. I shall hearken to you very chearfully, and (as much as my business will permit me) without distraction.

Vic. Then, Sir, be pleased to observe, that a former Oath (therefore Obligatory because Legal) does bind a person so much to a discharge, that 'till he has performed, he

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is not within his own power; but has deprived himself of his own freedom, either to discharge his promise, or not to discharge it, by vertue of that Oath and Obligation; and therefore can neither in Justice, nor Reason enter into a contrary Bond.

Ald. You are sometime, Mr. Vicar, good at a comparifon; cannot you make me apprehenfive of your meaning by a fimilitude?

Vic. Yes, Sir, that I can: Suppose I owed to your Worfhip an hundred pounds, which I promifed you to pay at fuch a time; and, after this, I engaged to another not to pay you your money; which of thefe promifes do you think I were obliged to perform?

Ald. The former, without doubt, to pay me my money.

Vic. And do you think the latter promife could at all difoblige me from my former to you?

Ald. No, by no means, for then any man may lawfully play the knave.

*Vic. Apply this then to the Cafe in hand, and you will find that, in a Promiffory Oath, there is not only the Obligation of a promife, but it becomes as folemn as the
ftrongeft*

Strongest Engagement can make it. For you not only call God to witness the present Contract, and consequently to testify against both your injustice and unfaithfulness, if you do not perform it; but by your own mouth you curse your self, and pray God to observe, both your promise, and performance, and punish you severely, if you do not faithfully discharge this Obligation. This is included in the last Clause annexed to your promise; So help you God by the contents of the Book, which you then kiss to seal the truth both of the one and of the other. Now then, if your bare promise, in the former case, where your interest was concerned, was concluded by you, not only sufficient to oblige to its faithful performance, but also, to supersede all future engagements, that did attempt to null the former Obligation; much more must it be argumentative, and convincing, when, to a promise, there is superadded an Oath; in which not only your own Concerns, both in relation to your Estate and Liberty, as a Subject of *England*; and in relation to your Soul as liable to an account before a future Tribunal; but also the King and Kingdoms welfare, in relation to the interest of Church and State, are wrapp'd up. Much more

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(I say) must this oblige to a full and faithful performance and discharge, and be a bar against either the lawfulness, or obligation of any future Oath to the contrary.

Ald. Your Argument must of necessity now be convincing, and I must be unfaithful to mine own faculties, and not only so, but (what we account a great deal worse) reject mine own interest and concerns, should I again have my belief so imposed upon, as to conjecture, that an Oath, or Promise, is vacated, by anything of either kind to the contrary, that may be subsequent to what went before ; and therefore I now see that the Covenant and Engagement (those accursed impositions, and destructive gins to ensnare souls) oblige to nothing but repentance ; and I must seriously put my mind upon an undissembled godly sorrow, for that I was so rash and unadvised, as to admit such guilt and blemishes upon my soul by such manifest Villanies, and horrid Perjuries ; and God grant, that my Repentance may be as true, as my Conviction powerful.

Vic. I am heartily glad to see your Worship so flexible, and that, upon a rational conviction, you recant your Error. Indeed, I have sometimes met with men whose hearts have been hard, when their heads
were

were soft: But you are too much the Master of Reason, and, consequently, of your own passions, to think that a shame, which is a Crown of glory; and, either through an affected bashfulness, or proud resolution, to abandon and forsake your own Bliss. I hope God will bottle up your tears for your former Crimes, which by your future Loyalty, testifying the reality of your Recantation (I hope) will be converted into lapses and escapes; and being nailed to the Cross of our blessed Saviour, will not only be suspended in relation to their future Acts, but be dead to their Motions and Inclinations. Is there any thing else that you will command my assistance in, before we leave this Subject of our discourse?

Ald. Since you are so civil, in relation to that Office I bear in the Town, and so industriously studious of my welfare and satisfaction, that you enquire after what proves your own work and burden; I shall not at all complement you to a forbearance, though I thought indeed, out of respect to you, as well as in relation to mine own affairs, to have put a period to our present discourse.

Vic. I had hoped that your Worship had (by sufficient testimony of my Zeal and Inclination to the discharge of that pleasant and

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and most honourable function, that the disposal of Heaven, and the Laws of this Nation have instated me in) been fully persuaded of my chearful undertaking of any task, that might conduce to the discharge of the Obligation of that Office, that God Almighty, by his Delegates, has entrusted me with: And therefore I shall not only forbear any censure or imputation of incivility, if you please to give occasion to lengthen our discourse 'till the night interrupt us; but shall make it my humble and cordial request, that your Worship will be pleased to propose such doubts, as yet to you may remain unsatisfied.

Ald. *Truly, Sir, I am no less delighted with our present Conference, than you seem to be with the discharge of your duty: and therefore, I hope, you will dispense with mine Age and Place, if I shall farther enquire into what (though it has been already treated, yet) is not well fixed, either in mine understanding, or memory.*

Vic. Pray, Sir, what is that?

Ald. *You were sometime since urging this as a reason against taking Oaths contrary to ours of Allegiance and Supremacy, because we were not then in our own power, and therefore could not oblige our selves.*

Vic. Very

Vic. Very right, and I think it to be a good Argument.

Ald. So it may perhaps, if I did understand it; but I would fain have you to use the same way in this, that you did in the explanation of the former reason.

Vic. What! by Similitude?

Ald. Yes, Sir, that is the way I mean.

Vic. Then I shall travel no farther than your own Shop for a Comparison to explicate this, which is but an easie Riddle. You have, I know, an Apprentice; or two?

Ald. Yes, Sir, that I have; for they are (according to my management) as good money as any Commodity I have in my Shop: I had three of them, 'till one of them ran away from me, and, in another place, bound himself Apprentice to another Master.

Vic. And do not your Worship look upon him as your Servant, and obliged to serve out his time still?

Ald. Yes: and I can, in Conscience, and Equity, as well as in Justice, and Law, force him to come hither again.

Vic. But, it seems, he has since contracted with another.

Ald. That is nothing; his former Indenture is still good.

Vic. But will not his last Contract null

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null and vacat his former relation?

Ald. No: For if it would, we shall not dare trust our Apprentices out of our Shops; nor give them any correction when they deserve it; nor make that gain upon them which we usually do, by a thrifty way we have of dealing with them, but immediately they would desert our service, and oblige themselves by Contract to another.

Vic. These are Inconveniencies bad enough, especially to you, who (it seems) drive a Trade in Apprentices; but there must be some formal reason, why your Servants Contract with another does not vacat his Præ-contract with you.

Ald. *Methinks your own reason might dictate an Argument sufficient to you.*

Vic. You know, Sir, that I have been respondent all this while, and now I would fain become the Catechist.

Ald- *I will not quarrel at that word; for your continual testimony of your civility and submission, give an uncontrollable evidence, that you do not think you have boyes to deal with.*

Vic. I wish we had only those to Catechise; for then there would be hope that the Nation would be well Principled in time; it gives me some cause of mistrust, that you think
think

think I have a design in these questions; but I would only know your reason, Why the Contract of your Apprentice with another cannot make void his Præcontract with you?

Ald. *That is plain, and obvious to any; and I wonder you will be so scrupulous to ask.*

Vic. Truly, because I would be informed.

Ald. *Then the reason is, because he was my Servant before; and so cannot become servant to another, 'till his time is first expired with me.*

Vic. Then (if I apprehend you) your reason is this; Your Apprentice, being before bound to you, was not at his own liberty, to indent with any other, 'till, first, he was discharged of his Obligation to you; and therefore the latter Contract must needs be censured as an undutiful attempt, and becomes void in the very Act.

Ald. *You have now well expressed my meaning, and is not this reason argumentative?*

Vic. Pray, Sir, what say you?

Ald. *Truly I think it so conc'usive, that it will not admit of any answer.*

Vic. Then you have now done my work for me, and I hope you will not by any means dislike your own actions.

Ald. *Your meaning, Sir.*

G

Vic Did

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Vic. Did not you ask me, but now, a reason, why he that was not in his own power, by reason of the Obligation of a former Oath, could not lawfully take a subsequent opposite to the former, and if taken, could not oblige?

Ald. *That I did, but what then?*

Vic. Then apply but the Case of your Apprentice, to the matter in hand, and then, what you deemed a Problem, is manifest to you, according to your desire, by a familiar Similitude.

Ald. *Indeed (Mr. Vicar) herein you have been too hard for me ; and caught me in a Net N: of mine own making.*

Vic. Nay, Sir, however it is surable to your Trade, for you to deliver out the twine, when 'tis another makes the net.

Ald. *Well, Sir, since it has hapned so fortunately, I will pardon my Boys running away, because, by that, he has brought this Argument home to me.*

Vic. Indeed, Sir, I am not at all sorry neither, that I had both such matter, and opportunity to enforce it.

Ald. *I think now you have sufficiently answered all my doubts, and given me abundant satisfaction, that what I before renounced out of Interest and Formality, I shall now do out*
of

of Conscience and Duty. But now I think of it, there is one potent Objection, that a Non-conformist Minister (who indeed I think is a good man) urged against me the other day, when he would have drawn me over to his Party.

Vic. Pray, Sir, what is that? And I am the more earnest to know, because men of that Character, by which you have described that Gentleman you mentioned without a name, have as little reason for most they say, as any Party that I know.

Ald. I know not what reason you suppose them Masters of; but this Argument was like to startle me, (and I am not well satisfied about it yet) it was the example of the Gibeonites.

Vic. What! the cheating the Israelites, with their mouldy bread, and old shoes?

Ald. No, Sir; your drolling shall not evade the Argument.

Vic. What was it then, because they had cunning insinuations under the pretence of Embassadours?

Ald. Although I take a great many of those that cannot conform to our Church in all things, not only to be pious men, but also wise, and therefore may be subtil in their Arguments, by which they endeavour to save Souls; yet they

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think themselves (and many sober men own them so too) the true, and not pretended, Embassadors of Christ.

Vic. I presume your Worship has not that qualification, and therefore do not think you own them for the Messengers of Christ.

Ald. *You see I come in all my Formalities to your Church.*

2. *Vic.* Well, Sir, I shall not question your carriage in that particular; nor yet your Creed concerning those people: that may be reserved for a fitter opportunity, before we part. But pray, Sir, why should those that daily endeavour to cast down your staggering faith thus startle you with the example of the *Gibeonites*? Was it because they had Wine Bottles with them? These possibly might have proved your Customers. For though they were rent, and so plainly appeared Schismatics; yet, like Fanaticks Consciences, were bound up, and so might prove as much your interest to entertain them, as it is to you to enter leaky, or decayed Wines at a Custom house.

Ald. *I wonder how you came to have so great an insight into Trade; you know, your too narrow inspection into the faults of men, has almost quite undone you. Why should you think a*
Non-

Non-conformists Argument so weak ? You know, the Dutch were almost too hard for us, meerly because we contemned our Adversaries.

Vic. I must confess your Advice is suitable to your self, sage and old ; I have found, by experience, (a word sometimes of great significance) since I came to this Town, that the most contemptible person is able to do another an injury : I hope you will not think I contemn the Non-conformists, because I have not so great an opinion of them as your Worship has : But pray, Sir, to the Case in hand ; Why should the *Gibeonites* so much put your Reason to a doubt ? Was it because their Garments were old, and so might be Objects fit for your Charity ? Or because they came out of a far Country, and so might be good Merchandize here ?

Ald. Fic, Mr. Vicar, now you shew your self very weak.

Vic. Really, Sir, I cannot imagine what should be able to startle your Reason, in the History of the *Gibeonites* craft with *Joshua*, unless I should this time blunder upon it : Was it because they rode upon Asses ?

Ald. Methinks mine ears begin now to be altogether burdened ; Pray tell me the place where the Text is to be found, and I will then

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quickly discover the Argument, which I fear you foresee will be too difficult, and therefore you study these Evasions.

Vic. It is not because I fear any difficulty, more than ordinary, in that example you seem so much to triumph in; but because I think there is a great parallel betwixt the *Gibeonites*, that cheated *Israel* into a League, and those Non-conformists, you seemed to applaud, who religiously betrayed others into a Covenant: But because I would not at any time baulk a Fanaticks Argument, they being, you know, modest men, I will not only tell you the place, but find it out ready to your hands.

Ald. *Mine eyes indeed are somewhat dim.*

Vic. Is not that a Bible that lies in the Window, with gilded leaves, and blew strings?

Ald. *Yes, I think it is my Wives Bible.*

Vic. Shall I, Sir, make bold with it?

Ald. *Though I do not usually venture to dispose of my Wives Affairs, yet I shall presume, now she is out of the way, to let Mr. Vicar have the use of her Bible.*

Vic. I thank you, Sir: I shall reach it then, and look out the place.

Ald. *But why do you look at the beginning? Surely 'tis not in Genesis.*

Vic. No;

Vic. No; I know that, nor yet (whence the Phanaticks usually fetch their Arguments) in the *Revelation*; but I would fain know where it was Printed.

Ald. *And what was the place?*

Vic. Where womens Bibles use to be Printed; at *Geneva*. >

Ald. *That I have heard frequently commended for an holy City.*

Vic. Very like! but I hope you will hear it so no more; lest Innovation and Rebellion should be stamped for Piety, and *John Calvin* get into red Letters.

Ald. *I know not who that Calvin was, but I have heard him very well spoken of in the Pulpit.*

Vic. That may be, when Rebellion and Murder was in fashion.

Ald. *I fear this diverting discourse makes you forget the Text you are looking after.*

Vic. No, Sir, whilst we are talking of *Geneva*, I must of necessity mind the *Gibeonites*. Now I have found it: There is the Story, in the ninth of *Joshua*. If your Worship please to put on your spectacles, you may consult the Text your self.

Ald. *That I shall—— I have been something long reading over the Story, both be-*

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cause it makes a whole Chapter, and also because I would willingly weigh all Circumstances, lest any thing, through my treacherous memory, should escape the Objection, which the Gentleman I told you of urged to me the other day.

Vic. In that you do what very well becomes your Place and Grandeur; nor to speak any thing rashly, and unadvisedly. But pray, Sir, what is your Argument?

Ald. *It is in brief this. We find the Israelites making a League with the Gibeonites, which by the Story appear to be part of those that Israel was not to be at peace with; this League was sealed to them by an Oath, and so it was properly (as the Apostle saies) the end of all strife. Now this Oath must of necessity be unlawful, because contrary to God's Command, of the total extirpation of those Nations: And yet the Israelites think themselves obliged to keep this Oath, notwithstanding the illegality of it, Ver. 19. Nay, to confirm, beyond all contradiction, the Obligation of the Oath, not only from the reason of the Princes of the Congregation; we have sworn to them by the Lord God of Israel, now therefore we may not touch them; but because, somewhere I am sure in David's time, we find Almighty God visiting the Land with three years Famine;*
and

and the reason of the judgment is particularly expressed; because, contrary to their Oath, Saul slew the Gibeonites.

Vic. The Text is in 2 Sam. 21. at the beginning. Is this the strength and force of your Argument?

Ald. Yes; and I wish you may be able to give an answer to it.

Vic. That I hope your Worship shall not have much cause to fear. But, methinks, I cannot but admire that clemency, which is still kind to such prodigious Traitors, who dare yet, and that to a person of your Port, who are an Alderman of a Town, and a Justice of the Peace, urge such an Argument as this, for the establishment of such an accursed thing as the Covenant was; that has been plainly demonstrated, by several Pens, to be totally destructive of the established Government both in Church and State! Are such as these think you safely tolerated? When they conjecture that Obligatory which brings the Kings Head to a Block, and binds them to kill all the Bishops, Deans, and Prebends, if they cannot otherwise extirpate the Hierarchy.

Ald. I am sorry to see you thus in a rage, to express so much of imprudence and passion against those people, who may be again in a capacity

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capacity to do you Mischief. Let the higher Powers look to the answering your Objection, and do you look to answer mine, for you are not like to escape so.

Vic. No, Sir, I will not now be bribed to silence, though your Worship in those cases do very frequently command me. But the reflection upon such ruinous consequences does not a little disturb me.

Ald. I plainly perceive you to be in a Passion.

Vic. Yes, Sir; though age has cast a mist over your eyes, you are easily able to see mine infirmities, and every moate that is in mine eye; you would be angry, if I should tell you, that you have a Beam in your own.

Ald. And I have reason too.

Vic. I shall not at all question your reason, but yet I think your sight may fail, when you take a little Mouse for a Mountain, and an ugly Dog-fish for a Royal Sturgeon.

Ald. I fear your passion has transported you to madness.

Vic. No, Sir, it is Zeal intranced, and sublimated by a Chymical operation.

Ald. I cannot imagine what your meaning is.

Vic. Nor

Vic. Nor I yours, to think this Example of the *Gibeonites* so potent an Objection, that you doubt whether it admits of any answer.

Ald. *Pray let me know then from you what may be powerful enough to invalidate it.*

Vic. That you shall, without any more protraction: Your Argument, Sir, supposes the League made with the *Gibeonites* to be altogether unlawful.

Ald. *Yes, that it does, and with reason too; because God had prohibited it.*

Vic. But all Prohibitions are not Universal; for some, being qualified with certain conditions, become, thereby, restrained.

Ald. *Yet this will not admit of such an evasion; for, saies God, Take heed to thy self, lest thou make a Covenant with the Inhabitants of the Land, whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee.*

Vic. I know the place very well: It is in *Exod. 34. 12.* But if you well observe those words, you have recited, there is contained in them a full solution of your doubt. *

Ald. *That is what I cannot discern, and shall be very glad, if you can make that Assertion good.*

Vic. I

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Vic. I cannot well fail in this, where the condition is so manifest, and apparent; You know, in all Statutes, the Preface contains the reason of Enacting; and therefore an Act of Parliament is usually interpreted by the Preamble; and the design and intent of any Law is to be discovered from the cause and reason of its Sanction: Thus is it in the case in hand; God prohibites a League with these Nations, lest it should prove a snare to the *Israelites*.

Ald. *This seems to me to confirm the Prohibition to be general.*

Vic. No, Sir, for if you please to look farther into the Text; at the 14 and 15 verses, you shall find, that the reason why a League, with any of the Inhabitants, might prove a snare to *Israel* was; because, by their example, and familiarity, the *Israelites* might be drawn to the Commission of Idolatry: Which is also the same reason again repeated in *Dent. 7. 4.* when the cause of this fear then ceaseth, the Prohibition is vacated, where the reason of the Law is totally withdrawn.

Ald. *But how could the reason of this Law cease, when 'tis notoriously known that the Canaanites were most grand Idolaters?*

Vic. Just as a Fanatick, when he becomes a
Convert

Convert to the true Religion, and subjects himself to that Church, from which before, violently, and without cause, he made a Schism, is no longer liable to the Civil Mulcts of those Penal Laws that concerned him before his Conversion; so when these *Canaanites*, or any part of them, should relinquish their Idolls, and devoutly resign themselves to the Worship of the God of *Israel*, they were no longer concerned in the Penalties of the Laws against the *Canaanites*, but might be capable of a Truce and League. And should not the Law have been thus attended with condition, there would have been no room left for Repentance, and consequently the Almighty would have offered violence to his own Mercy, which he has declared to be over all his works, and is an Attribute in which he most delights.

Ald. But the very Action of God is enough, at any time, to justify his Attributes; and therefore I shall not much trouble my self with that; yet methinks a Law, so Universal, must of necessity oblige to such a total destruction of those Nations that the League with the Gibeonites must needs be unlawful.

Vic. Let not, Sir, this Universality so much disturb your Reason, since I can easily exhibit an exception of particulars. What do you

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you think of *Rahab* that entertained the Spies, was not she a *Canaanite*? And yet she was preserved alive, *Josh. 6. 25*. And what can you think of those, which were not of the Children of *Israel*, which, remaining even in *Solomons* time, were not destroyed, but brought under Tribute? *1 Kings 11*. What do you think also of those *Canaanites* that dwelt in *Gezer*, who inhabited amongst the *Ephraimites*, and served under Tribute? *Josh. 16. 10*. The same may also be concluded from the *Gergasens*, *Mat. 8. 28*. who continued to be a People, even till our Saviours time, for, being omitted in those particular enumerations of the Adversaries of *Israel*, that were by divine appointment to be rooted out, we may rationally conjecture that they yielded at the first.

Ald. *Well, Sir; that you may not think me alwaies wedded to mine own opinion, but that I may by the power of Argument and Reason be sometimes divorced from my belief; I must of necessity confess your instances have convinced me, that this great Prohibition was Conditional, and, consequently, not so Universal, as I supposed it. But what was the League then which was prohibited?*

Vic. To answer this, I must distinguish of a double League; there is a Social League,
such

such as one Prince makes with another upon honourable, and sometimes advantageous terms to both; and this was simply forbidden: but there is a League with a conquered Enemy (as upon the yielding a Town to the Besiegers, or a whole Nation becoming Tributary to a Conquerour) and such a one might be struck with those, that, relinquishing their Idolatry, were in the nature of Profelytes; and submitting themselves, would pay Tribute to the *Israelites*; which I take at first to be the case of the *Gibeonites*.

Ald. But, if you have rightly stated the difference betwixt the Israelites and the Nations, methinks, 'tis somewhat strange, that Joshua seemed so much concerned for his surprize; and that the whole Congregation should so severely murmur against their Princes, for swearing to these Gibeonites.

Vic. All this may very well be reconcilable with our precedent discourse; for the Princes having made this League, and bound it by an Oath, and not, according to their duty, enquired of God, they might fear a Judgement for that omission, and this might be the cause of their discontent and murmuring.

Ald. But why shou'd Joshua, after the League,

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League, then pronounce them accursed, and condemn them to the slavery of the Temple, to be Hewers of wood, and Drawers of water, if the unlawfulness of the League and Oath had not caused a burden to his Conscience?

Vic. That I hope your Worship will no longer object, when you shall understand it to be an effect of Justice; It was a punishment for their deceit and falshood; insinuating subtilly their remote dwelling, when they were indeed their near Neighbours. So that, by this, I hope, you discern how much your canting Objector, but malicious Traitor, would have imposed upon you, in urging this Oath of *Israel* to the *Gibeonites*, as a motive for you to keep the Covenant; when there was not so much as the resemblance of Parallel; the Covenant being evidenced to be impious, and unlawful, but the League and Oath, in relation to the *Gibeonites*, has been sufficiently proved valid and good. I hope for the future you will be so just to your self, as well as your Office, to punish such insinuating Cheats, that, under the pretense of Piety and Religion, and winning Souls to Jesus Christ (as they call it) most scandalously, to the ruine both of Church and State, instill poysonous Principles into the
minds

minds of men, that swell them up to Tumult and Rebellion ; and would, as you see, (if possibly they could) infuse their venome into the subordinate Magistrates ; that they, growing big with Saintship, should extend beyond their just proportion, and their own esteem should render them better than their Prince ; and consequently, he would be so vile in their eyes, that his Laws should, first, appear ridiculous, and so, not being the effects of Wisdom, would be unfit to be executed ; and then his Person must be, first, contemned, and afterwards set aside, or murdered.

Ald. I hope their Principles are not altogether so bad as you make them ; I am apt to think, that they themselves are convinced by those Arguments which they enforce to others ; and therefore impute all their miscarriages to their weakness, rather than their obstinacy ; and all may be (though it proves unfortunate in the expression, and those consequences that are deduced from their Principle) the effect of good meaning. But to leave such discourse, because you know, at present, they may be bold, having almost the same privilege with yourselves. Since this Non-conformist has given you this trouble, by his Objection : I would have you endeavour to requite him, by exhibiting an

H

example

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example that may convince the truth of your former Position, that an unlawful Oath is not Obligatory, and binds to nothing but Repentance ; by this means you shall discharge your debt to him, by putting him to the expense of an answer, or, for defect of that, to be liable to the disparagement of a baffle in his own Trade : As also you will, by this, carry on your main design of confirming and strengthening that belief, which you have been a means to raise in me.

Vic. Although, Sir, I would evince my self to be more a man, than to be at all jealous of anothers affection ; yet, methinks, by your discourse, I have too much reason to suspect the Non-conformists to be Rivals to the Church of England, in relation to the winning your Judgment and Opinion : But, because I should be injurious to my self, in disturbing mine own peace, as well as disobedient to you, in a denial of my duty, should I at all protract an answer to your Commands. An example now presents it self to my mind, (so great a design and promptitude is there even in my very memory to serve you) that will plainly evidence that an unlawful Oath binds to nothing but repentance.

*Ald. Though I am neither able, nor would
it*

it become me, in the place in which I am, to follow your Example of Courtship and Complement; yet, Ile assure you, not only my Judgment and Opinion, but my deportment and action shall be guided by the example you produce, if I shall at all find it cogent. Therefore, without any more Circumstance, pray what is it?

Vic. It is the Example of David.

Ald. That cannot, surely, well be rejected, because he was a man after Gods own heart, and I cannot but long for the particulars.

Vic. If your Worship please to take your Wives Bible, and turn to the twenty fifth Chapter of the First Book of Samuel; there you may compare the particulars of my Argument, with the truth of the Text.

Ald. I thank you, Sir, for that motion, because it will avoid many Doubts, and Questions, that would inevitably have arisen, should I not have seen your Argument plainly deducible from the Sacred Example; but also this will imprint the reason in my mind, and so I shall be the better enabled, upon a view of the Text, to urge the Argument, in its full strength, to the Gentleman for whom it is designed; and my own conviction will be the more powerful and lasting. I have now found the Chapter, and therefore you may proceed to your Argument.

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Vic. Your Worship remembers (I hope) what the thing is to be proved.

Ald. Or else surely I must be asleep. The thing to be demonstrated from this Example is,
O: that an unlawful Oath is not Obligatory, unless to repentance.

Vic. Very good. Thus then the proof is attempted. *David* being provoked by the churlishness of *Nabal*, to whom he had sent Messengers for Provision, made a Vow, with an Execration to himself, to kill all that appertained to *Nabal*, Ver. 22. For so, (saies he) and more also, do God unto the Enemies of *David*, if I leave, of all that pertain to him, by the morning light, any that pisseth against the wall. That is, let God thus permit the Enemies of *David* to triumph and affront him unpunished, if I suffer any of *Nabals* Family to live 'till the morning. Here you see *David* had obliged himself by what most would conjecture a sufficient Bond: And yet, when *Abigail* comes, and in the behalf of her Husband, falls at his feet, begs his pardon, and gives him her Present: *David* was so far from pursuing his rash and bloudy design, that he acknowledgeth guilt in his passionate inadvertency, and gives praise and glory to Almighty God, who had raised up *Abigail*, not only to meet him, but to obviate his
his

his design also, and to divert his intention from shedding blood: *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel* (saies he, Ver. 32.) *which sent thee this day to meet me, and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me, this day, from coming to shed blood, and from avenging my self with mine own hand.* And that he totally desisted from the accomplishment of this Oath and Vow (which he himself declared wicked, in that it obliged him to a murder, to gratifie his Revenge) is apparently manifest, from his dismissal of *Abigail*, Ver. 35. *Go up in peace to thine house, I have hearkened to thy voice, and accepted thy person.* So that from this Example it plainly appears, that an unlawful Vow or Oath obliges to nothing but sorrow and repentance for ones rashness and inadvertency.

Ald. *I thank you, Sir, for this full Conviction, not only of my unlawful entering into the League and Covenant, with those that forsok their own welfare, and ruined a flourishing and prosperous Kingdom; but also for your perfect proof that such unlawful Oaths are to be repented of, and not at all persisted in: I will promise you, the first opportunity I have, to urge your example (which methinks seems exceedingly Argumentative) to that Gentleman that would have endeavoured to persuade me to*

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his opinion, with a second forfeiture of my allegiance to my King.

Vic. I cannot well conjecture what reply that womans Minion may make to it ; but, I hope, if any thing, he should chance to blunder upon, should seem to startle you, it shall not be accounted any disparagement to your own Judgment, if you accept of my help and assistance, in confirming your Worship against all such blasts and storms.

Ald. I hope I have sufficiently learned to trust men in their own Callings, and to keep (where great advantage does not present) within the limits of mine own ; and therefore, as long as you shall remain my Minister, I shall not refuse, in what has reference to the welfare of my soul, to consult your Judgment, as well as mine own. I hope you need not now spend any more of what time remains (which indeed I could wish lengthened) about the perswading me to disown the Covenant and Engagement ; for I not only renounce them, and hastily repent of my rashness and inadvertency, but abhor their most prodigious and bloody consequences with my whol heart. I am very joyful that you had an occasion of discoursing these things with me, which, I remember, was taken from that Passage of yours some hours since, that you did not think I was obliged to observe all those

those Oaths that I have taken: Is there none other Oath that you know, I have taken, that does not oblige, for indeed I would have as little burden upon my Conscience that might engage to action, in such troublesome times, liable to changes, as I could.

Vic. I can mention to your Worship but one more, which, being a Lawful Oath, I fear (though there is no great ground for it) you burden your self too much in making more conscience of its observation, than those of greater, and higher concernment.

Ald. Pray, Sir, what is that ?

Vic. 'Tis when you swore to observe the Customs of your Town.

Ald. *We cannot certainly be too strict in these, for they are the Bulwarks both of our Credit, and Honour, and the Supporters of all our Grandeur and State.*

Vic. I do confess, indeed, that is an usual Custome, for your bloud to rise, proportionable to your Offices; and the Mayor is dubb'd with the Town Mace: And a Gentleman hardly knows himself to be such, or, at least, others take little notice of him, 'till he becomes a Member of your Society; whereas Tradesmen are not only inferiour to Gentlemen, but the Yeomanry are by right to be preferred before them. You must not

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think that honour is to be weighed in your Worships Scales, nor conveyed to men in Punchions of Prunes.

Ald. Hold, Sir, your Wit runs before your Wisdom.

Vic. That it does (I must confess) always when it dares speak before your Worship : 'Tis strange, methinks, you can permit all the Statutes of the Realm, not only to live *incognito* and retired, but, when they dare speak at the discovery of any Treason or Vice, you can, either by your Authority, or Connivance, gag them to silence. You can suffer the King, and all the pious Supporters of the Church, to be spotted by a perpetual reproach; you can, quietly, and without controule, permit Conventicles, both of Drunkards and Fanaticks; and though they load you with affronts, publick, and private, if they, or their Relations, are your Customers, instead of suppression, they shall have the encouragement of your own Society: All the Laws both of God and Man (though not only undervalued, and slighted in discourse, but too frequently blasphemed and reproached, and with impunity violated by persons of the blackest Character, whom a Pencil, dipped in the Infernal Lake, can scarce decipher) you cannot only be Stoical and
unconcerned

unconcerned in ; but oftentimes, violate your selves, what you ought to punish in others ; and then they commonly fare the better for your own sakes. But if a little Custom of your Town be concerned, though it be but playing a Dog amiss at a Bull-baiting, or having but a sheeps hinge the less at a publick Feast, there is nothing less than thunder and lightning ; the head is presently shook, to see whether he has not lost his brains ; and the Band is carelessly turned to the Ale-house ; and all is in such disorder, and confusion, as if a fire were raging through the midst of our bowels, and a present damnation were brought upon the World : and all this (no doubt) from a mistake, concerning the Obligation of the Customs of the Town ; and though your Wisdoms understand Perjury too well, to be much concerned at a few Acts ; yet here you think your selves forsworn, if an Aldermans Gown should prove moth-eaten, or the Rats should gnaw it for want of victuals ; so tender are men in their own concerns.

Ald. *I see, plainly, you cannot live, unless you are allowed a little liberty ; which has been the reason of my patience (though not without violence to my Place, and Grandeur) whilest you have too severely reflected upon the Customs*
of

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of our Town ; and, in my judgment, sometimes a little too broad, for one that is but a Minister. We never used to be served thus, but so great a distance did our Aldermen keep with men of your Coat, that one of us never came by any of them that belonged to this Town, but the Minister was down to the ground to them, and looked upon it both as his duty and interest so to do ; though they perhaps (having so much burden upon their shoulders, by reason of the Publick Affairs of the Town, and other Accidents more private) might for the present take no notice of him. But, not to disturbe, or provoke your passion, lest respect to you, in forbearing the Law, should cause my Brethren to censure my lenity, where I ought to be severe : I shall freely pardon your past Expressions, because they were uttered in mine own house, if for the future you will discourse only of the Point you have in hand, without particular instances in our Customs.

Vic. Sir, I am sorry that my Expressions sometimes prove so unfortunate to offend your Worship ; I had hoped you would, now, have suffered me to unbend the Bow : But, however, since your Reputation, or at least Greatness is such, that your Will is a Law to the whole Town, all reason it should be so to me : Had I told you, that Mr. Mayors
door

door had no greater Mark, or Badge of Cognizance, than the biggest heap of Oyster shells; or that when Queen *Elizabeth* came to Town, and Mr. Mayor and the Corporation met her on horseback, and riding through the River, his Worships Horse would have been so bold, as to drink in the same Cup with the Queens; which he being a well-bred Gentleman, repressed, the reason being asked, he told the Queen in very good Language, that he should not be so unmannerly to drink, 'till her Majestie's had done. Had I reviv'd such Stories as these, your Worship indeed might have justly blamed me for reviling the Corporation, and joyning you and your horses together; but since I instanced only in a few Customs, not much taken notice of abroad in the World, and that, privately, betwixt you, and I, for an entrance only to the serious state of a useful Problem; I hope I shall obtain your forgetfulness, and pardon (since even that is customary to your good nature) for what I have said; and then, I shall immediately exhibite my present thoughts, and reading, concerning the Obligation of your Customs in general by vertue of your Oath, without reflection upon any particulars.

Ald. *That is it which will make me retract*

my

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my power and command, and use you only with familiarity and entreaty: I must now keep you to this promise.

Vic. I am much engaged to your Worship, not only for your former civilities, but also, for that you manifest so great a present delight in this discourse, that though I have, not only by unmannerly interruptions, but frequent diversions to another Theam, that might sometimes prove ungrateful to your Worship, attempted to put a period to this present task; yet you have so tempted the repetition of my former discourse, that by your discreet, and wise management, there has been a kind of method in what would otherwise have been confused; and you have still prompted forward a design, that has alwaies been as pleasant unto me, as I hope it may be useful to you.

Ald. *I know not yet what use I may make of the design, nor do I know what you drive at, which makes me willing to provoke you to the end of the discourse; that I may be eased of the execution of some of my Oaths, which, I perceive, are so many, that they will otherwise at last execute me.*

Vic. That, Sir, you perceive is the present design; and because I find your Town Customs to be very many (though perhaps you
account

account none needless) and (if your Worship would confess) sometimes burdensome too; and I would instance in some, but that I have promised to speak in general: It will therefore be no ungrateful attempt, if I endeavour to discover an effectual way, how to save your Oath entire, and yet abate the rigour of your Action, in the observation of all particular Customs.

Ald. I shall be very glad to hear any thing proved, though I like our Customs very well; and they seem to me to be good and laudable.

Viz. Observe, Sir, then (if you please) that you are to look upon your self in a double capacity; as a Subject of the Realm, and so a Member of the Great Society, that are governed by the Laws of our Supreme Prince, and gracious King: Or else you are to observe your self as a Member of a particular Society, separated from the general body, for the discharge of some particular duties and designs. As you are a Subject of the Realm, you are no doubt obliged to observe, and keep, as much as in you lies, all the Rights, which by Law, or Custom appear to be just, and lawful; and yet you are not bound to observe those things, that, even amongst the Learned in the Law, are so controverted, that they become so doubtful, as

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to be rendred altogether uncertain, and 'tis not yet determined in which part duty and obedience is expected. Yet a Subject ought alwaies to have his will so ready for Submission, that as soon as these doubts shall be taken away, to subject himself according as Law shall direct his Duty, and a full determination regulate his Practice. But as to the particular Laws and Customs of a Town, because Omissions of some inconsiderable Customs, do neither derogate from the honour of the Place, nor at all tend to the destruction of the Community, there must a Latitude be allowed: **First**, Because many of them may be not only frivolous, but vicious, and no man can be obliged to sin. **Secondly**, Because some may now be burdensome, and insupportable, in the present condition of a Town, or Corporation, which, when established, might very well be supported; and no man can be bound to be injurious and unjust, to that Society which he is sworn to preserve. And lastly, Many Customs of a Town may, either after the Oath be abrogated, or by a general Omission nullified and withdrawn; and no man can be obliged to support that which has no being, or is voided by the same Authority which gave it its first being; for it is an old Rule,
that

that, What institutes, may abolish. To render the Case therefore plain and practicable; we must distinguish of those Priviledges and Customs that are Fundamental, and those that are only Accidental and Circumstantial. Those that are absolutely necessary to the support of the Corporation, and whole Body, in their Honour, and Power, that is, essential to preserve the whole Community for the ends and designs for which it was at first instituted; you are necessarily obliged to the strict observation of: because these being withdrawn, the Society will be ruined and fall. But, secondly, there are some By-Laws and Customs, that, either may be less Fundamental, or, only tend to the External Pompe and Grandeur of the Community. and no way necessary for the Actions of Justice, or Execution of Law: For the principal end of embodying Towns into Corporations, was for the better Government of those Numbers that there usually swarm together, not only for their own advantage, that they might be capable of protecting themselves, having Laws and Justice to defend themselves from malice, and violence; but that, for their ease, and convenience, they might have Justice speedily executed upon Offenders. Now this may be done with an Iron Rod, as well as a Golden

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Golden Mace, as well with a Sword, as a Gold Chain, and in ordinary habit, as well as Scarlet; but yet because External Pompe and Splendour of Magistrates usually casts a dread upon the People, and makes them timorous to offend; these things, proportionable to the Wealth, and Dignity, or Populoufness of a Town must be had a special respect to, lest the Building decay with the Pompe and Ornament; and in this Observation, common Custom, and present Practice of the general body, ought to regulate each particular. Now even these also must be distinguished, into what are for the present practised, having already, either by decree, or usage received their Sanction; and what shall for the future be established: Those that are present, are to be observed no further, than by probable tokens you can conclude their first Sanction and establishment did intend; so Laws are frequently interpreted according to the intention of them, where the sense in the Expression becomes dubious. Those that are future to your Oath, which, you are obliged to the observation of, if confirmed by sufficient Authority, must alwaies be attended with these Conditions; that they are possible, that they are honest, that they are just; for no
Oath

Oath can oblige either, to impossible, dishonest, or unjust. And lastly, they must not interfere with any of the Statutes of the Realm: For every particular Society is subordinate to a Power, that is more general, and supreme. Thus, though your Town is immediately governed by a Mayor and Aldermen, yet they themselves are bounded and limited, not only by their Charter, but also by the Laws and Statutes of the Realm; and; consequently, whatever they act contrary to these, is not only *ipso facto* void, but they become responsible for their deportment before a Superiour, and more general Tribunal. So that any Custom, or By-law, that contradicts any Publick Statute, cannot oblige you to the observation of it, by vertue of your Oath; not only because your Oath cannot oblige beyond the intention of the first Imposer, but because such a Custom, or By-law becomes evil and unjust, it being opposite to what you were before obliged to a discharge of. But yet finally (to close this Case, which would have taken up too much time, had I fully opened it) lest you should yet think this Obligation (which most Aldermen, that are past the servitude and slavery of a Corporation, are fond of) too much unbended and loose; You must have a care,

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left in any doubtful, or confident omission, the circumstance of contempt, or scandal attends it; that is, left in your withdrawing from what others think an Obligation, you do act with contempt of that general Society of which you are a particular Member; or when you are convinced, that your omission is such a prevalent example to others, not being fully possessed of the lawfulness of your forbearance, that they are thereby induced to practise the same thing with your self, not having the same belief, and so it becomes a snare to their Souls, and a torment to their Consciences. To conclude this then; He that does faithfully (as much as in him lies) and without scandal, or just offence to others, endeavour to observe the Laws, and Customs of that Society, of which he is a Member; so that he will not, refractorily, and, with his full consent, violate any thing that tends to the support either of the Being, Justice, or Honour of his Corporation, which he is convinced is his duty to perform, in that Place and Station which he possesses; and endeavours also to use his utmost diligence to be acquainted with the particulars of his duty, does, without doubt, discharge a good conscience, in disburdening himself of that Obligation that lies upon him, from his
Oath,

Oath, to observe the Customs and Constitutions of his Town, and Corporation to which he relates.

Ald. I thank you, Mr. Vicar, for stating this duty; not only for that I plainly perceive, that the failure in some little Punctilio does not make me violate my Oath; but also, because you seem to be tender, not only of the being of the Corporation, but of its Pompe and Honour too, so that I do not find but that this may be fit to communicate to every Member of our Society, and will as well oblige Inferiours to their distance with their Superiours, and the dutiful observance of their just Commands, as engage Superiours to be content with their own Priviledges, without invasion of the Rights of others.

Vic. I know not how your Worship may misconstrue any secular or merry expression; but otherwise, you know, that ever since I came to this Town (notwithstanding frequent disobligations) I have not only endeavoured to conform my self to those Customs that are good, and laudable, and so do not interfere with other duties that relate to my Calling, nor entrench upon those few Priviledges that I can claim, both as a Gentleman, and a Priest: But alwaies to perswade others, not only to a submission to

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Authority in the general, but to a peaceable subjection to yours in particular: and, indeed, I am so true a Churchman to our present Constitution, and consequently, so, great a Lover of Loyalty, that I cannot only with all chearfulness obey his Majesties most just Commands, but also submit to all his Subordinate Ministers, as those that are Commissioned by him, for the punishment of evil Doers, but for the praise of them that do well; summoned thereto by the Apostles Argument, for so is the will of God. And therefore you shall never fear me an enemy to Corporations, but I shall alwaies serve you to the utmost of my power, which you know (by reason of my poverty, and contracted livelihood in this place) I cannot make run parallel with my will; But I hope you will not be irreconcilably angry at what is only diverting mirth, and (as I think) inoffensive pleasantness; especially, since your Worship has been pleased sometimes, in your discourse, to put off your gravity, and now and then to dart forth a Satyr, that has been as sharp as witty.

Ald. *I cannot but be well pleased with what you do, especially since where you seemed to give offence, you presently did beg my pardon; and now that you give so great a Testimony to*
Magi-

Magistratical Power in Towns, and Corporations, here is my hand, and my heart with it. I wish your maintenance were encreased, either by an equal pound rate upon the houses; or that the Bishop (since he has many preferments within his power) would bestow some, upon such men, as endure more than ordinary toyle, and burden in Corporate Towns; that so we might not want such a Ministry, as might be able, by their constant Preaching, to confirm such as already stand, and by their Learning and Argument reduce wandring sheep to the Fold.

Vic. I most humbly thank your good Worship for your pardon, and for your charitable apprehensions of my good intentions, and designs, in order to the support both of your honour and Authority; and though I have little hopes ever to see your wishes accomplished, yet I cannot but honour you for your sincere desire; and I could joyn with you in your Petition, that a maintenance may be advanced by a pound rate, not so much for mine own emolument (although this usually prescribes to the World) as for a future, and perpetual supply. For you know I am a single man, and so can (though not without some difficulty) make a shift with my Salary; yet when a poor man comes to this place, with Wife, and Children, he must

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of necessity want Supplies for his Family, unless the charity of others relieve him ; which, indeed, in the times in which we live, where Iniquity does so much abound, is waxed too cold, either to heat, or cherish. But as to what you would wish, though not prescribe to the Bishops ; it seems to me to be a little unreasonable (unless they may perhaps think it incumbent in a time of exigence, to abate, for the present season, some Privilege) to be forced to give their preferments to Market Towns, who are very well able (did not the penury and contracted hearts of their Inhabitants obstruct and hinder) to encourage learned and pious men, and may methinks be perswaded to it, especially since the benefit of enjoying such a Ministry is to be confined to their own bosomes: And the welfare of their precious and immortal beings (of more value than their richest Merchandize) are concerned, as to their future felicity.

Ald. I must needs confess (though some of the Towns (that are yet populous) are very poor) most places that have any tolerable Trade yet remaining, are well enough able to maintain their Minister, if their wills were sutable to their abilities, yet do you think that a voluntary subsistence is so reconcilable with the Port, Authority,

Authority, and Dignity of the Clergy, as what is by Law established?

Vic. No, Sir, nor would I perswade you to conjecture that such a dependent maintenance is futable to the ends for which the Ministry was at first designed by God himself; and therefore the Priesthood, under the Law, had a particular, although large Revenue, by right, and debt assigned to them; and, under the Gospel, *St. Paul* does, more than once, inform those that were most contracted and covetous, that he could claim a privilege, for sowing to them spiritual things, to have a power to reap their carnal; and that those, who preach the Gospel, ought to live of such a reward as is due to them that bring glad tidings, which the word *εὐαγγέλιον* does not improperly signify. For the design of the Ministry is, not only to be the Publick Officers, to put up the Peoples joyn't Petitions to Almighty God; but also, in their Homilies, and Orations, to perswade to vertue, and sharply to reprove the rebellious sinners; and by all motives, that may be rational, to dehort from the pursuit and practice of Vice, which they will be tempted to be partial, and remiss in, with relation to those who are their Benefactors; lest they should peevishly withdraw that porcion,

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which, whilst pleased, and indulged, they did freely contribute. Besides, the piteous and slavish carriage, far below their honourable Function, they must be guilty of, to those that are their supporters and relief; rendering themselves mean and contemptible, and with their own shadow will be apt to darken and obscure others in their esteem amongst whom themselves are usually conversant. Add to this, their necessity of submission to every humour, and vain desire of their Auditory; not only in relation to the publick discharge of their most solemn duties; but must sometimes accompany them to their very Vices, and can only be witnesses to what they dare not for their livelihood controule. And besides all these, not only inconveniences, but mischiefs too, a dependent maintenance is never certain, but has such continual ebbs and fluxes, that he can never be at peace with himself, but so filled with what hopes and fears such an unfixed Revenue can possess him with, that these thorns of the World, will not only render his studies and contemplations uneasy; but, too frequently, fruitless also; and his head will be so wounded, that is, crowned with these, that they seem only to be a Prologue to Crucifixion.

Ald. There-

Ald. *Therefore, methinks (if mine Option could pass into a Vote, and that were able to make an establishment) I would rather (as I was saying) that the Bishops should, by giving them some other preferment, as an addition to their slender livings; encourage our Ministers, and so withdraw all inconveniences, that in their present condition, usually attend them.*

Vic. *I cannot so much doubt of that charity, which I have alwaies found eminent in your Worship, as to think you design this Argument, under a pious pretense, to save charges: But yet, methinks you do, with too much eagerness, pursue the Reverend Bishops Priviledges; for they have Chaplains, that are, for the most part, learned men, and far more deserving, than we poor Vicars (that have not money to buy those Books, which they are able to read and digest) that must alwaies have the best preferments that fall in the compass of their Lords Donation. Besides the Bishops have Kinsmen and Friends. Add to this, that these are waies by which they commonly oblige persons in Authority, and Power, by disposing some of these Livings to their Chaplains, and Acquaintance: Therefore, unless we can find out some other way, I fear there will be little hope from this.*

Ald. *But*

Bp's

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Ald. But there are some little sine-Cures; and small Livings that so great persons, of such interest in the Bishops, will not care to accept of, and these methinks may befriend Corporations.

Vic. How do you mean, that Corporations should be enriched with the spoils of these?

Ald. No, Sir, I would not be accounted so Sacrilegious; but that those that have the care and burden of exercising their Ministry in great Towns, where their duty and work becomes enlarged, but their reward narrow, and contracted, should, proportionable to their Learning, and Piety, have some of these bestowed upon them, as a supplement and encrease to their short Revenues.

*Vic. Now I perfectly understand you; and shall leave you to perswade them to it. In the mean time, because I think your Petition may miscarry, what do you think of this way? Let all Corporations, throughout England, that send Burgeses to Parliament, desire those that serve there for their particular Burroughs, to cause a Bill to be drawn up, and therein to appoint Commissioners to Assess in all Market Towns, by an equal pound rate (that pay under an hundred pound *per annum* to their Minister) to the*

the value of this hundred pound, to be from year to year collected, and recovered by Law to their Ministers use : and this will be a moderate, but certain establishment.

Ald. *Truly, I shall be very willing to promote so pious, and religious a work ; but I fear many Townsmen will presently endeavour to obstruct and hinder it.*

Vic. That will not be within their power, if the principal persons in Towns are for it.

Ald. *But what do you think of the Non-conformists interest in such a concern as this is ?*

Vic. Truly, Sir, I think it is not their interest at all to have such a thing accomplished, because then, there being an able and pious Ministry established in Towns, (where you know is their greatest confluence) their *Dagon* must of necessity fall before the Ark of God ; for their Teachers will be effectually confuted in publick, baffled, and consequently disgraced in private, and their Profelytes will daily fall off from them, and be won again to Christianity and Religion.

Ald. *But, they say, they have Friends above, and they, making their applications to them,*

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them, by some craft or other will get the Bill to be thrown out of the house ; or else protract it at a Committee so long, 'till the Session be at an end.

Vic. I heard indeed they did something much like it the last Session, but I could hardly believe the truth of the report ; because 'tis, to me, a very difficult matter to believe any thing, almost, that such persons are either the Actors, or Relators of.

Ald. *Why should you be of so little faith ?*

Vic. Strange methinks that the talking of persons of their Character, should, by a kind of Sympathy, put your dress into Scripture Phrase, in common discourse. But the reason
X why I suspended my belief was, because in their Actions they are commonly Hypocrites, and in their Words Liars ; They will not swear, nor, if they do, will they perform : Nor will they drink hard amongst the Wicked, as they stile the Kings most Loyal Subjects ; but with the Saints it may be lawful to enjoy the Creature, 'till they are not able to enjoy themselves : Some of them that abhor Drunkenness, do take a wonderful delight in Gluttony ; for their Teachers greasing their mouths well, makes their Tongues the more slippery : And (as I am informed) have taken up a new way of wishing health,
not

not by the Ceremony of a Glasse of Wine, or Cup of Bear, but eating a good full Morfel, for *Ceres* is as good a Friend to *Venus*, as *Bacchus*, and is alwaies less scandalous. But I cannot but wonder, that you should think such as these to be so powerful with the Parliament. Do you suppose that they have many Friends there?

Ald. I do not know the number of their acquaintance, but this I can say, that they are the most vainglorious boasters in the World, if they are not assured of some interest now, and have larger hopes, if this Parliament were but once dissolved.

Vic. As to that, we must leave it to the discretion and will of his Majesty; and in the mean time, we cannot but praise Almighty God, that has raised us up not only a nursing Father to his Church, but convened so many pious Patriots, that, like so many Pillars in his holy Temple, have hitherto supported the Fabrick, notwithstanding all the raging winds and storms: And this not without exceeding great justice legible in the largest Characters of his Providence; that as an House of Commons, by Violence and Usurpation, did once deform and ruine his Church; so an House of Commons should now be made the grand Instrument

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Instrument to rebuild, and support it. But if these noble and indulgent Patriots of our beautiful and well-constituted Church, should either by accident or policy be dismissed; which way could the Fanaticks designs, that are so destructive in themselves, and can no longer, with *Fauxe's* fire-works, be obscured in a Vault of Secresie, but become visible and manifest to all, now take effect, and prosper in the midst of such a World as must needs be cautious, and, like the burned child, dread the fire?

Ald. *The same way they did before.*

* Vic. Say you so Sir? And must the old Game be played over again, that has lost so many fair Estates, and been apparent to the World in colours of Bloud? That has made the Church crackle with its Ruins, and weltered a Nation in its own Gore, that, by treading upon the Miter, got high enough to twitch off the Crown, and bring a Sacred head unto the Block.

Ald. *I do not say that all those effects will follow; nor are causes supposed so unavoidably to be linked together, as to be alwaies the Fathers of such Children.*

Vic. If the old Rule in Logick hold, That the Causes being exhibited, and put into order, the effects will follow, we have reason

to

to fear nothing but death will attend their Phlebotomy.

Ald. *I told you before, I was not very well skill'd in Logick; but this I know, that the Pot is boyling.*

Vic. It must be then the Pot for the Prophets; and I question not but crackling thorns are the fuel they boyll it with. But pray, can you tell what they would be at?

Ald. *Truly, I suppose, at least, part of the old Game.*

Vic. But what are the designs they do at present aim at?

Ald. *Thus much I am assured of, a present Toleration, and, after that, a future Sanction.*

Vic. But do you think they can well agree, seeing they differ so much in opinion from each other, upon the certain qualifications, and limits of their comprehension?

Ald. *They will all agree in the ruine and subversion of the present Church.*

Vic. That I easily consent to; but will they not then again fall out and disagree, which Party shall gain Superiority to the rest?

Ald. *I cannot but say, they have all designs of being Universal in their Authority, and Opinions; and no doubt may differ, even*

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to wars and bloud, which shall impose upon the rest.

Vic. Then it seems Impositions will not be unlawful, when they proceed from such sanctified men as these; and they do (notwithstanding all their canting and moderation) but pull down our Uniformity, to set up another.

Ald. *This they will almost now acknowledge, when urged close by a strict Disputant.*

Vic. I am sure 'tis plainly deducible from their present attempts, to captivate and enthral the Judgments of all men to their own; besides the former example of all Parties, as they took their turn in their Supreme Authority, is Argumentative even to a demonstration: But if the Case be thus with them, 'tis but putting them, at their next motion to the Parliament for comprehension, to draw up their own Bill; and they will be so long about the agreement for the bounds and limits of every Party, that the House of Commons, nor King neither, need fear no more trouble with them.

Ald. *That indeed would be a cunning device; for I remember when they had formerly pull'd down Episcopacy, and the Presbyterians would have had their Discipline establisht, a*
few

few Independents made some Objections; which, before they were solved, and the dissenting Brethren reconciled, we were all run into irrecoverable Confusion, and so the Government was never established.

Vic. That was the very example which I had in mine eye, when I was proposing to you the former mean of securing our selves, and satisfying them, by giving them a little countenance and imployment.

Ald. *But they will scarce make their Addresses to this Parliament any more; because they see they have several times miscarried; and therefore begin now to mistrust that they are only fooled by Courtship, and Civility.*

Vic. What will they attempt then, shall there be a Resurrection of their beloved Rebellion? Though I think indeed it has been bedrid only, not dead all this while.

Ald. *'Tis hard for you to trust your Adversaries with Swords in their hands, but they alwaies protest against this Method.*

Vic. Their Protestations are but of small Authority; for every one of them is a Pope to himself, to absolve from any Oath or Protestation: but which way then will they accomplish their designs?

Ald. *He tell you then (but you must be secret) they hope to get this Parliament dissolved,*

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ved, and then to get another of their own persuasion.

Vic. That is a way, indeed, that I did not think of; because now the Multitude have no power to dissolve a Parliament, nor can the Fanaticks have their will in Election of Parliaments, so as to sway the balance to their own side.

Ald. *They are scandalous men, you know.*

Vic. They are so; and malicious enough, to watch all opportunities, to ruine those that in the least bear any opposition to them: But Corporations send most Members to the Parliament, and Fanaticks are purged out by a Law; though, indeed, it is to be justly feared that in many places as there are Church-Papists, so there are Church-Fanaticks also; and the As may be formidable in a Lions skin, if he has but grace to hide his Ears. But I hope however, if the State of Affairs should command a new Election, Your Worship will take a special care that we have such chosen here as may not only take more care, than others have, of the welfare of the Town, and the support and honour of the Corporation; but that will faithfully assert the Prerogative of the King, and the due and legal Priviledges of the Subject, not forgetting a poor bleeding Church,
that,

that, betwixt the wounds of too numerous Adversaries, is ready to die and expire. For should this Party, that now appear in sheeps cloathing, through diligence and treachery, obtrain their desire; alas! they would be but stalking horses to the Papists, who having caught their Prey, would mount them to ride away with it. I hope therefore that all Towns will remember, that Civil Wars are ruinous, and destructive to all Trade and Commerce, that Garrisons fill them with noise, and tumult; that Violence and Plunder will neither be advantageous to themselves, nor Children; nor can it at all be delightful to them to become Servants to their own Apprentices; and therefore will elect Gentlemen of worth, when ever the present Members shall die, or be dissolved, that know what it is to become Slaves to Tenants; to be arraigned before a Consistory of Elders, and to have a Parson curse them by Bell, Book, and Candle, whilst the Surplice is cut into a white sheet, for the Gentlemen to wear upon the Stool of Repentance: But pray, Sir, (if I may not be uncivil to your Worship) How can you arrive at so much knowledge of the intrigues of that Party?

Ald. *I am acquainted with some of the heads of them.*

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Vic. They may perhaps be some of your Worships Customers.

Ald. *Yes, truly, I take a great deal of money of that Party.*

Vic. I need not then wonder at your kind and courteous carriage towards them: But are you acquainted with any of their Ministers, that have formerly been beneficed?

Ald. *Yes, some of them are almost every day in my Shop, or else I meet them up and down the Streets.*

Vic. And so you salute, and pass by one another as freely as if you were of one Religion?

Ald. *Sometimes we make some stop, and discourse with each other, concerning Affairs, either abroad, or at home.*

Vic. Yet you are a Justice of Peace.

Ald. *What then? May not a Justice of the Peace discourse with anybody?*

Vic. I do not presume to restrain your discourse; but do not you remember that there was a Law made, that persons, under those qualifications, by which you have but now described your acquaintance, should not come within five Miles of a Town that sends Burgeses to Parliament, upon certain Penalities prescribed?

Ald. *Yes, I very well remember the Law.*

Vic. And

Vic. And do you not remember, the Justices of the Peace are to execute it?

Ald. Yes, that I do; What then?

Vic. Then out of your own mouth are you condemned, and convinced of manifest and open Perjury.

Ald. How? I hope you dare not condemn a person of my Port, and Age, of such a horrid and Prodigious Crime. Perjury is a name that Christianity abhors.

Vic. If the name seem too rigid and severe to your Worship, I can use the trick of the late times, and abate the name, if you will but acknowledge the thing.

Ald. Truly, I must be more convinced of the truth of the thing first; you mistake, certainly, the nature of Perjury.

Vic. Do you think that a person making you a promise is not obliged to a performance of it?

Ald. Yes, unless I release him, or his Promise becomes unlawful or impossible.

Vic. Very good, Sir, and will you not tax him of unfaithfulness, and falshood, if he failes (as much as in him lies) to accomplish it?

Ald. He must needs be a knave that failes in it, and does not give a satisfactory reason why he could not do it.

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Vic. When a Promise then is sealed with an Oath, do you not think there is a stronger Obligation ?

Ald. *I must of necessity conclude so, from mine own acknowledgments, in our former discourse.*

Vic. And do you not think him guilty of Perjury that swears falsely ?

Ald. *Yes sure, when any one affirms a falsehood upon Oath, or denies what he knows to be true, he must needs be a Perjured person.*

2 *Vic.* And how can you possibly excuse your self in the present case ?

Ald. *I did not in that affirm any thing which was false, nor yet deny what was true.*

Vic. No? Did not you promise before Almighty God to put in execution all the Laws that belong to you as a Justice of the Peace?

Ald. *Yes, that I did; but what then ?*

Vic. Then it follows from thence that you swore falsely, because you have not fulfilled and accomplished it.

Ald. *But I thought he only had been Perjured that, when called to give his Testimony upon Oath, did bear false witness.*

Vic. I thought your Worship had well known

known the difference betwixt an Assertory, and a Promissory Oath.

Ald. I do not know so much in Divinity, but that I can admit a further information, and (I hope) without any disparagement to that Place and Office in which I am.

Vic. I suppose that, in this, as well as many other questions, your Worship has proposed, you pretend ignorance and dissatisfaction, only to try my skill in Definitions, and Argument. Yet, notwithstanding, lest our discourse should by any means admit of interruptions, I shall satisfy this scruple, by telling you, that the very Phrases express their own meaning ; and themselves make compleat descriptions of what is designed by those terms.

Ald. Pray discover this in a more particular Explanation.

Vic. An Assertory Oath then is, wherein a thing is by such a solemn confirmation as an Oath affirmed to be : and because falshood may be as well in a Denial of what is, as in an Affirmation of what is not ; therefore this Oath does also include a denial of what is.

Ald. But this Oath will not concern our present Case.

Vic. Therefore I told you there was a

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Promissory Oath, wherein a thing is promised, and the Obligation to its accomplishment sealed by an Oath: As in the Case of David and Jonathan, and between Abraham and Abimelech, 1 Sam. 20. 11. & 21. Gen. 31. 32.

Ald. I now will understand the difference, and perceive that Perjury does not only relate to our Affirmations, or Denials of things upon Oath; but also to our Promises, that are established with the same Sanction: And so far I must of necessity make a preparative to the acknowledgment of my guilt in not putting in execution those Laws against persons of that Character, which mine Oath, as a Justice, obliges me to perform. For I love not self-conceit-ness in any body, much less in my self; and shall never stop mine ears against Argument, nor yet resist mine own convictions; I must confess, from what I have read, and heard, I have had sometimes war within my self for neglecting, so much, the punishing of Offenders against the Kings Laws and then meeting with some of those whom the Penalties of the Laws did most concern; they would persuade, and tempt me to the relaxation of what would otherwise certainly have provoked me to action; and so reduced peace within my self, by telling me, that to permit them to live in peace, was that
Catholick

Catholick Charity so much commended by persons of all persuasions.

Vic. It is an easie matter to pronounce peace, where the God of peace speaks no such thing; and to wrap up Toleration, and Comprehension, in the soft Phrase of Catholick Charity: Thus does the Physician gild those Pills that squeamish Patients are to swallow. You see then, what strange Cures Mountebanks in Divinity are able to accomplish, though, when they have used their utmost skill, they heal the hurt of the Daughter of Gods people slightly (as the Prophet speaks.) They skin over the out-side, and only for the present dead the pain, when, there being within corruption and rottenness, the anguish returns, and every touch upon the wound is smart and tender.

Ald. *I must confess I have sometimes found it so; nay, the very thoughts of my horrid guilt of Perjury, in these wilful neglects we are now speaking of, has made me, for several times together, been guilty of an omission in relation to the Sacrament of the Lords Supper.* ●

Vic. And yet, notwithstanding, you could content your self with living in the guilt of what your own Conscience, it seems, frequently accused you, and, in your own thoughts,

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thoughts, rendred you unfit to partake of the blessed Supper of our Lord?

Ald. *I was loath, methought, to be guilty of adding sin unto sin, and iniquity to iniquity.*

Vic. And do you think you had not the same guilt by forbearing?

Ald. *Whatever become of the sin of Perjury, I am sure, I did not incur the guilt of receiving unworthily.*

Vic. The foundation of your satisfaction in this, I suppose, was, because you did not receive at all?

Ald. *Right.*

Vic. But do you not know, there are sins of Omission, as well as Commission?

Ald. *What then?*

Vic. Then I suppose your Worship (admitting your guilt of swearing falsely) in omitting the Sacrament, upon this consideration, did add this Omission to your former Commission; and so there was sin added unto sin, and iniquity to iniquity, both in your own Phrase, and Action.

Ald. *But would you have me approach the Sacred Table, with loud Accusations from mine own Conscience and such perturbations in my mind, as the sense of such a sin must of necessity raise? This were*

were to have mine own conscience witness both to mine unworthiness and guilt.

Vic. Do you think then, that out of kindness to your Vice, you may, without guilt, abstain from the Sacrament, which our Saviour has commanded to be celebrated with solemnity, not only to testify and encrease our Charity, and other Graces; but also for the perpetual remembrance of his Death and Passion, and that 'till he comes to sit upon his Throne, and pass an equitable sentence upon the whole World?

Ald. Without doubt, I must not approach those mysteries with sins upon my Conscience unrepented of.

Vic. Nor are you invited by the Priest in the words of the Church, unless you both repent of your sins, and are in charity with the World, and intend to lead a new life.

Ald. Why then should you blame me?

Vic. Because these qualifications are within the compass of your own attempts, assisted by the grace of Almighty God, which is never wanting to persons of a sincere endeavour.

Ald. What would you then advise me to, that I may prepare my self against the next Sacrament?

Vic. Your

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Vic. Your Worship, I presume, for the most part, are able to give advice to me; but since you give leave, it will be accounted no unpardonable boldness, I hope, if I give you some directions, and it will be no disparagement to entertain them, since they shall be the Churches Rules.

Ald. *But let them reach the particular case in hand, that so your resolution may not be more tedious than the canting and length of a Fanaticks Prayer.*

Vic. All my fear has hitherto been, that my words have been too quick and short. If you find then that Perjury has been your crying sin, let repentance, attended with faith in Christ's blood, wash away the guilt of your former falsehood and omissions; be in charity with their persons, against whom your Oath obliges you to execute the Law; and be resolved, for the time to come to be more sedulous, and frequent in the discharge of your duty.

Ald. *This indeed is, like your self Mr. Vicar, short, and sweet.*

Vic. It has the greater probability to keep your justice waking; and I am sorry the advice is no more like your Worship.

Ald. *But, all this while, I have led you in a chud.*

Vic. Let

Vic. Let your face, Sir, then, that, proportionable to your Estate, is bright and rich, dispel and scatter it with your beams and raies; that so I may have a Rubrick to direct me.

Ald. *You are marvelous witty, good Mr Vicar, thus to reflect upon my very face.*

Vic. I must confess your Worships Face needs no reflections; yet 'tis but gratitude to return those raies that before were darted upon mine own body, I touched only upon your Face, because I would not make a bridge of your nose.

Ald. *You think now you have hit that place, where there may be matter enough for discourse.*

Vic. Truly, Sir, you led me to it, and yet I must beg your pardon, if I refuse thus to defile my Language. Thus 'tis alwaies, you see, when gall, and passion begins to stir.

Ald. *Really, Sir, I am so much sensible of mine own infirmities, as not to be altogether averse to the pardoning yours.*

Vic. I thank you heartily for your candour and ingenuity, and shall be more obliged to you for your forbearance, if you please to antidote your own passion, the better to prevent mine.

Ald. I

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Ald. *I did not intend any other than a trivial Jest; when I seemed to reflect upon the stature of your body.*

Vic. *And I intend none other than earnest, when I reflect upon the proportions of your mind.*

Ald. *But stay, Mr. Vicar; your late discourse supposes me guilty of Perjury, and so, I must needs confess, I am, as far as the case has hitherto been stated: but are you sure I can plead nothing for my self in bar of your Accusation, and defence of mine Innocency?*

Vic. *I shall by no means accuse you, lest you brand me with Sathan's Title, and call me the Accuser of the Brethren: But I cannot imagine, how you can excuse or acquit your self from swearing falsely, when you do not put in execution the King's Laws that belong to you as a Justice of the Peace.*

Ald. *Yes, I can exhibite London it self, the Metropolis of the Nation, for an example of omissions here.*

Vic. *London cannot possibly be looked upon as a pattern and exemplar for smaller Towns; for because of the populousness, and largeness of that City, it is impossible the Magistrates can be able to discover those misdemeanours, and breach of Laws, that are there*

there daily acted, and committed. Great Cities will be alwaies full of unclean birds, but the Cage is so big, that the Magistrate knows not how to catch them.

Ald. *But do you think that those unlawful Assemblies (as the Statute calls them) do never make noise enough to come to the Justice of Peace's ears ?*

Vic. I do not at all question that; no doubt the meetings are tumultuous enough, not only to reach the ears of those, but sometimes approach so near them, as to leave the guilt at their very doors; (unless there they have a trick of restraining their Families, better than we have in this Town.) But our question now is matter of right, not of fact; and we are to follow Precept, before Example. What ease can it be to any particular mans torment, to have a great many more roaring with him? And since we are enjoined in Sacred Writ to perform unto the Lord God our Oaths, it will not at all detract from that just misery I must be possessed of, for the wilful and constant breach of mine, though all the World were also involved in the same guilt.

Ald. *What you say indeed are great truths, nor were the Example at all Argumentative, unless their forbearance of rigour, and execution*
did

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did persuade us that there was a supreme connivence.

Vic. I hope Supreme Authority may not only have liberty to wink, but sleep, when he has both Commissioned, and Commanded others, and bound them, with the Oath of God upon them, to look to the general performance of duty, and to punish those that play the Truant, and violate Laws in contempt of Authority. Thus does the Shepherd go to sleep, when (as he supposes) he has with safety folded his sheep: Thus does also the Superiour Commander quietly take his rest and repose, when he has set his guards, and appointed to his Army Quarters. The Pilot has given forth his Orders, and the Ship may be in danger, unless the inferiour Officers, in their severall Watches, steer right, and keep the Seamen from mutiny, or disorder. But you cannot say there is so much as a Supreme Connivence; since the same Laws are still in force, and the Royal Proclamations have sufficiently been founded through the whole Nation, and the Oath of a Justice is still the same, attended with the same force, and Obligation.

Alc. But, notwithstanding all your reply, it's thought, by persons both of interest, and parts, that there is some countenance given.

Vic. You

Vic. You are easily made to believe these things, that perhaps you may be willing should be accomplished; but can you conjecture, that God Almighty, who has declared to the World, that he will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain, will be satisfied for the breach of your Oath with such slight Arguments, with which you seem to silence the outcries of Conscience, when the Authority of his Law, and honour of his most glorious name so deeply challenge the vindication of his justice?

Ald. *We know that mercy is an Attribute our Maker so much glories in, that meekness and kindness, unto others here, making us to partake of the Divine Nature; he is then most pleased, when this is most exercised.*

Vic. Though Charity is the great virtue of the Gospel, not only in uniting the whole World under one Religion; but because it is so frequently enjoined us; yet this is never either justly limited, or exercised, when it thus interferes with justice, or a due discharge of our Obligations and trust; for you are not to bear the Sword in vain, but you are appointed, as well for the punishment of evil doers, as for the praise of them that do well: Therefore to punish offenders, does well accord with the Law of Charity.

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Ald. But Non-conformists, for the most part, will scarce acknowledge that they come within the compass of Offenders, however, are very hardly ranked amongst evil doers, which the Sword of Justice does properly reach.

*Vic. I do not affirm, that these are the only Offenders; nor that all wickedness rests with them: But you seem to conjecture, that a mortified face, and a meager look, or a sober twang upon a well-strung Nose, is enough to make a Saint in *querpo*.*

Ald. Truly, if once I set about the execution of Laws, I shall not have respect of persons.

Vic. In that, Sir, your Justice will best resemble him who is our most perfect Pattern, whose Equity admits no spots; and your resolution against Vice will be the more sincere, by how much the more it becomes Universal: but never let a demure face, be received as a character of an innocent heart. Let the Drunkard, and the Swearer in common discourse, as well feel the stroke of your Arm, as the Rebel and the Schismatick; for your omission will as well be attended with forswearing (if others information, or your own senses become the accuser) when you inflict not the Penalties upon both, or either. I cannot conjecture Fanaticks to be the only Criminals,

Criminals, whom the Laws, you are sworn to execute, reach, no more than those were the only sinners, whose blood *Pilate* mixed with their Sacrifice, or those on whom the Tower of *Siloe* fell: But yet, I think, they are as great as any almost within the compass of Christianity. For I cannot but conclude Rebellion and Treason to be as black crimes as Rioting and Luxury, Spiritual Pride, and a lofty Saintship to be altogether as vain, and more impious than external Pomp attended with Superfluities, and a small Courage swelled into a Lordship. Till you can assure me, that Usurpation and Violence, Murder and Rapine, Oppression and Robbery, Perjury and False-witness, Lying and Slander can be admitted into the Chain of Piety, and become the Advancers of true Religion; that a supercilious morosity, and defect of Urbanity are good Morals; and contracted, narrow, and base souls, that always plead the Jewish Corban, whose Avarice is as insatiable as the Sea, and their Lust as incurable as the barren wombe, 'till these I say become the only vessels of honour, noble, and capacious for the Master's use; and the Second Table of the Moral Law becomes either lost, or its Obligation cancelled, I shall never account those persons, so loudly

I. 2 clamoured

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clamoured for by mad men and women, to be pious, or good: So little Justice have they for their separation, because they account themselves more righteous than their neighbours. But because it is not my present business (as a thing which I alwaies abhor) to lay more burden of sin upon their backs, who are already, pressed as a Cart with Sheaves; (and an excellent similitude indeed is this, where both the burden and the sense is equal.) I deem my discourse then only congruous with my present design, when it tends to perswade you, courageously, and universally, to execute the Laws against all Offenders; that not only Peace may be kept in the Streets, but preserved also in peoples Consciences. Though (as I plainly discern) you cannot but conclude the Fanaticks present insolency and rudeness, and apparent method to a future rebellion, cannot but a little enflame my Zeal; and, I hope our Adversaries will not dislike that in me, which they so much applaud in themselves.

Ald. Really I have been many times not only upon your discourses, but being legg'd and entreated, by many persons, both of worth and quality (who well agree with you both in fears and motives, and who have also in the late times,

times, more than ordinarily, for their Loyalty and Religion, felt the weight of usurping fingers) inclined to execute the Laws against those persons, that, regardless of the Law, do not only abstain from a just submission to the Commands of Authority, but also, in their Conventions and Meetings, exercise a quite contrary power; and, as those Gentlemen would suggest, prepare their Auditors, and number their strength, that they may be fit for another encounter. And then, consulting with mine own thoughts, I considered, that they pleaded Conscience for their Actions, which being tender, I cannot, methinks, endure to touch it, and, being a little God in the soul, I am loath to offer any violence to it.

Vic. I should not at all blame your tenderness, did not their numerous assemblies daily alarm you, their Spight and Malice continually caution those amongst whom they live, and the Obligation of your Oath endanger the eternal ruine of your soul. And you know death hastens towards you, and will be a bold intruder at a rich Aldermans Gate, as well as a poor Vicars Wicket.

Ald. 'Tis true indeed, we are all mortal; and I should be extreme loath to depart this World, with so great a sin, as Perjury, upon my

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Conscience unrepented of, which (as you well informed us the last Sunday) includes a new state of life, and must as well consist, in a future amendment, as in a cordial sorrow for what is past.

Vic. Say not, Sir, you would be sorry only to be arrested by death with so great a debt to God as Perjury does contract ; but rather resolve upon a sudden alteration, both of your mind, and practice. For be assured, if you should chance to die with such a scared Conscience, that, although pricked, will not bleed, you will part with your beloved Corporation here, only to be possessed of the Torments of Hell, and Companions of Devils : And I were better deal so plainly with you (though it may seem strange when compared with that wonted Complement which my dependent maintenance tempted me to) than to build you a Funeral Pile, perfum'd with rich Odours and Spices, in which, not only your aged body ; but, your very soul too, shall burn.

Ald. *I have heard Fanaticks sometimes styled fire and brimstone men ; but, I think, your Zeal is more hot than theirs, that is able to kindle such flames. You strangely startle me with your expressions.*

Vic. 'Tis better, Sir, to start a little in your sleep,

sleep, which perhaps may awaken you, than, when your house is on fire, to lie secure, 'till the devouring flames approach, and consume you. Better have some taste of Hell in your Conscience here, and to possess burnings in your apprehension, which may caution you to beware, than to inhabit the Regions of Devils, and to dwell in the midst of an eternal fire, when time, and you shall be, together, swallowed in a bottomless Abyss.

Ald. They pretend, with such confidence, to be God's People, that I am afraid I should be a persecutor of the Church of God, if I should inflict the Law upon them.

Vic. And are we, Sir, after all our pretensions of repentance for the Covenant (that Pandora's Box, that filled the Nation with all the evils and miseries of a cruel and distracting Fate) after all our relentings for former Perjuries; after all our trials of the ruinous Consequences of their destructive Principles; after the taste of all their poison, though wrapped up in gilded Pills; after the view of several Murders, both of Prince, Prelate, and People of all ranks and conditions; after the view of a bloody War, raised by these holy men, that spared neither Age nor Sex; I say, upon the view of all, must we now dispute whether Impiety be

L 4 Religion,

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Religion, whether Faction be Faith, or Rebellion and Tumult part of the Commandments? Surely, Sir, you have forgot your self.

Ald. I must confess, the present convulsions in my Soul, by reason of those fears you have raised in me, may cause also a weakness in my memory: I begin to remember, that the persons whom we are discoursing of, have been evidenced, both by their Oaths, and Actions, to be, indeed, of a different Character from the Church of God: and therefore, in relation to that, I need not fear the inflictions of the Law to be a persecution of the Church: But they have another Plea that sometimes startles me, that they act according to their Consciences; therefore to endeavour to restrain their Worship, will attempt the making them to sin against Conscience.

Vic. I dare venture a quarter of my Vicaridge, that those persons, who make this Plea, do scarce understand what Conscience is: And I believe, I can, from Scripture, as well as reason, prove, that the Objectors have no Conscience at all.

*Ald. That indeed being proved, as well as boldly affirmed, would be a great motive to persuade, and encourage me, in my Place and Office, to attempt, what (I hope from a
pious*

plom design) you thus endeavour to argue me to.

Vic. Pray, Sir, will you be pleased to inform me first, what Notion you have been induced to entertain concerning Conscience.

Ald. *I suppose, Conscience then acts, when, reflecting upon mine own Actions, or Opinions, I either accuse, or excuse my self.*

Vic. I do not enquire after the actions of Conscience, but would fain arrive at a description of it.

Ald. *I should think it then to be a judgment of a man upon himself.*

Vic. And do you conjecture a man's Conscience, thus described, to be appointed for the rule and guide of Action?

Ald. *I know there may be a false, and erroneous Conscience, as well as such as is true and good: and no man is obliged either to believe or act error.*

Vic. Then Conscience (according to your definition) cannot prove an exact Rule; and consequently cannot be a sufficient Plea for Action. Indeed, according to this, the most impious Blasphemer, and uncontrollable Sinner might make an excuse for all his Vices, by affirming his Conscience led him to it; nor could we well blame the Turk for his
daily

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daily Worship to his affected Mahomet, nor the Pagan for his Veneration of Idolls: Nay; the very Jews would have an incomparable excuse for their bloody butchery of our Lord and Saviour; since St. *Peter* assures us, they did it through ignorance, nay, the very Rulers too; and they therefore Crucified him, because they deemed him an Impostor. For, certainly, according to this false, though common, notion of Conscience, there is no action, though never so impious, or inhumane, but may receive its Sanction, and be justified by this Vulgar Law; if such a Conscience, that consists only in the Judgments, Apprehensions, Phancies, Opinions, nay, Thoughts of men, may be not only the Director, but Legislator. And if you think my expressions do not fully reach what is your import and intent, when any one excuses and justifies his actions because his Conscience informs him of their Equity and Goodness; It will be, but justice to your self, as well as kindness to me, to enquire strictly into your own Notion, and inform your Understanding, what you mean, when you say your Conscience satisfies you in such or such a thing; and you will find, 'tis no more than your present Opinion, and thoughts of what is the immediate subject of
of

of your apprehension : And if this were to be either guide, or excuse, then St. *Paul*, before his conversion to Christianity, might have satisfied, and excused himself for all his violence against the Christians ; when he not only imprisoned this Sacred Off-spring, but gave his voice against them when they were condemned, compelling them to blaspheme ; Murder and Cruelty might then have been established by a Law, and it need not at all been a trouble and affliction to this blessed Apostle, that he was exceeding mad against the Christians ; for he had the Testimony of a Fanatick Conscience, in that he verily thought with himself, that he ought to do these things contrary to the name of Jesus of *Nazareth*, Acts 26.9.

Ald. *Well, Sir, it is a matter, I see, of no great difficulty, for you to argue against my definitions ; but if this please you not, I hope you will exhibite a better.*

Vic. I should be loath so to describe Conscience (that sacred thing, which is to be kept inviolable, and indeed to be the rule of all our Actions) in words that make it to give countenance to the greatest impieties.

Ald. *If there be any defect, or fault in mine, it may well be excused ; since Conscience, too*
strictly

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strictly defined, is neither a part of my trade, or advantage.

Vic. A good Conscience, Sir, will be a sufficient advantage to any man, and it ought to be every mans trade to know it.

Ald. *It is your Calling then, Mr. Vicar, to inform us; and if I have not rightly stated Conscience, do you rectifie it, by your own description.*

Vic. That, Sir, I shall chearfully undertake, not only for that it is made an excuse for action, but the most part of those that resist Authority, and desie whatever almost is disorderly, or sacred, are deemed by you so consciencious, that you dare not execute the Laws upon them, for fear you should offer violence to Conscience. But you are satisfied (I hope) that they are persons dangerous to the State, and that their pretensions are not conformable to their actions, nor either suitable to the Word of God.

Ald *That I had sufficient conviction of, when I read those books you lately lent me, to wit, The Friendly Debate betwixt the Conformist and Non-conformist, together with the continuation of it. But I hear, Mr. Vicar, there is a notable answer to those two Debates you so magnifie.*

Vic. I must confess your Worship is not
at

at all deceived in your intelligence; only, upon perusal, I find it neither an answer, nor notable.

Ald. Methinks, Sir, you seeme a little too censorious, if not cruel, thus to stifle an infant in the birth, before it has been fully exposed to the World; and in two words to refute a Volume.

Vic. Really, Sir, it were no difficult adventure to storm all those wooden Forts which that Stoical Author has built in his discourse; though he had an whole Forest at his dispose, out of which he might select his Timber: Only I perceive the firmest trees were either too tall for him to lay his Axe to the root of, or else so well fenced with sharp briars and thorns, that at first touch they pricked his fingers, and frightened him from a farther access.

Ald. I do not think any persons of their circumstances can fear thorns, and they that have vanquished Sons of Anak, will not fear the trees of the Forest.

*Vic. Yes, Sir, since Hugh Peters's Sermon about Bramble Government, they are afraid to carry a bush at their backs, whilst they are in their Wilderness condition, for fear the bigger Trees of the Woods should, instead of bowing in a Complement to the Bramble, fall
down*

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down upon their heads, and voluntarily build a Funeral Pile, where they themselves would prove the Sacrifice.

Ald. *I thought they had loved to have been amongst the Briars ; a thorn in the flesh, however, may do them no great hurt.*

Vic. Verily, Sir, not a few of them are, by most persons that are intelligent, ranked now amongst the wild beasts of the Forest, and therefore they may delight in the Briars ; but those Debates have such overgrown prickles, that they are too sharp for their heads to encounter, or their teeth to bite off: though we know they have a long time had the Whetstone, and therefore may take the advantage to sharpen them.

Ald. *But pray, Mr. Vicar, what are your conjectures of that answer so generally cried up amongst them ?*

Vic. Then indeed (as you said but now) a thorn in the flesh would do them no harm, if they themselves swell with that Tympany, which the Author of the Reply wisely attempts to cure in the Debates. Truth is, those Debates seem to be written because our Adversaries were so puffed, but since the impression of their answer they appear quite blown up.

Ald. *But let me a little entreat your thoughts*
of

of that answer, which I doubt not but I shall meet with.

Vic. Now your Worship has read the Debates, I shall not at all scruple to lend you the Answer; having taken the Antidote, you need not fear infection; especially, because we may well expect, that so eminent a Physician, as the Debates Author is supposed to be, will expel the raging of that distemper that in the Reply attempts to return upon his Patients.

Ald. Is the Author of the Debates then fully known?

Vic. Yes, Sir, to those persons that alwaies pretended to the knowledge of hearts, and perpetually practised both the discovery and revelation of secrets.

Ald. Pray, Mr. Vicar, what is his name?

Vic. You may, if you please, examine me as a Magistrate; but pray, Sir, let every one abide in his own Calling, and do not begin to ask me my Catechism, since the sober Replier (drunk with nothing but his own passion) conjectures the learned Compiler of the Debates not able to answer to what's your name: But yet he does before divine (and thinks himself not besides his Calling) that he is able to describe, though not name, him.

Ald. Pray

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Ald. Pray, what does he suppose him to be?

Vic. Truly, no less than an Irish Saint, although at present an English Pilgrim; and yet, for all, because of the great affection our sober Respondent still retains for Leeks and Onions, the Gods of *Egypt*, (because they formerly seasoned their breath, with which they banished the mode of that which he, almost at the end of his discourse, calls Porridge) *St. Taffee* becomes the better Saint: And were it not for fear an Irish Footman might be apt to encounter a Shentleman of *Wales* concerning the Superiority of their Guardian, I would adventure more than a few Leeks, and a piece of tested Cheese, that the Irish name will prove, at long running, to great a word for such a sober answerer to pronounce in a breath.

Ald. But why do you thus wave reflections upon the book?

Vic. Not only that I may satisfy the peaceable desire of the sober Respondent, but because I would not, by a Private Conference, anticipate the Reply of our learned Opponent, who, being a Latitude man, as his Antagonist hints, is best able to inclose comprehension. Though I cannot but, under the Rose, inform you, that the Dialogue has met

met with some prickles, and the sober Answer does now and then rage with madness: But whoever was the Author of this Reply, he seems to be a better Textuary than Interpreter, though he has got the Assemblies Annotations by heart: and has their sense upon all occasions as exactly, as if he had at first influenced them: And to me seems a little unjust in that he is angry with all Glosses that do not come from *Geneva* or *Westminster*, names only some few Authors, and for reasons refers you to the sale of his Books. But when he has, with much study, and great pains, espied a figure in the Friendly Debates, how does he demonstrate it in words at length, that reach through his whole Book; and declaims against such partiality and collusion, that reckons not their party as numerous as themselves but encounters a part instead of the whole?

Ald. *Pray, what is that figure?*

Vic. Why! That which one of their experimental Preachers, formerly nosing a hard word called Sy—nege—doeth, but since has learned Synecdoche.

Ald. *Pray, Mr. Vicar, what Figure is that?*

Vic. Never a one that you learned in Arithmetick; but the Figure by which the
M Nation

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Nation was undone, and the Kings head brought to the block ; when a part was put for the whole in Petitions.

Ald. We never use such figures.

Vic. I know you never do in the Commodities you buy, but sometimes you may, by a mistake, in selling.

Ald. You seem to have such great skill in buying and selling, that a stranger will take you for a petty Chapman.

Vic. However, Sir, an English Pedlar may quickly prove as good a man as a Scotch Merchant ; and I see no reason why a broken Vicar may not set up for a whole-sale Shopman, as well as so many broken Shopkeepers commenced, in the late times, whole-sale Vicars.

Ald. But pray, Mr. Vicar, let us retire a little from the Shop to the Counting-house, and tell me what is that total sum that the Answer to the Debates makes the figure, you were speaking of, amount to ?

Vic. Upon perusal, Sir, and casting up his Accounts, you will easily perceive that the sober Answer charges the Debate not only with what is disingenuous, but unjust, in laying that sum upon the whole party, which, he saies, is but the debt of a part.

Ald. And

Ald. *And I do not see, how the Debate can acquit it self.*

Vic. I cannot tell what its Author will reply, but, if he were no wiser than your Vicar, I should tell him that a few exceptions will not vacat a general Rule; and truly, if this proves a fault, the Answer will be notoriously guilty, who in the acquitting of N.C. has justified a part instead of the whole, and that palpably throughout his whole book; and in many places if he can but acquit himself (as if he were the first *Adam*, and Parent of them all, and all in him were to receive their Sentence) he thinks the whole may presently plead not guilty.

Ald. *Truly, that seems to be a peice of an oversight for him, that undertakes to reprove another, to become guilty of the same Crime.*

Vic. Nay, Sir, had he been but once guilty, he might have been acquitted upon payment of his fees; but we find him again accusing the Debate for taking Weapons at the wrong end, and all things by the wrong handles.

Ald. *And must not that be accounted a fault?*

Vic. Troth, Sir, 'tis pity the Author of these Friendly Debates had not learned of

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his Adversaries to handle his Arms ; for experience has taught them skill : and had he been but half so well practised in two handed Pots, as the sober Answer would give the World to understand that we Country Vicars are, where he supposes us to be ignorant Sots, and idle Drones, he would have been better skill'd in the handling both of Owls and Noggins. But that which I would desire your good Worship to note, is, that this Answerer is guilty of the same fault (unless what is a fault in another, may become only a failing in him) in taking the Debate by the wrong end ; witness those great pains he has taken, in turning his Concordance, that he might effectually prove what the Debate does not, and perhaps the Author will not, deny, about the Holy Spirits assistance in Prayer, Christian Experiences, Pious Discourses, &c. the abuses whereof are attempted to be rectified, not the use totally withdrawn, the excrescencies and absurdities only pruned, but the Trees not digged up by the Roots: which the Answerer has every where mistaken, (through ignorance (perhaps) cannot be supposed) as if the Author of the Debates denied the existence or usefulness of the things ; which even we poor Country Sots (how ignorant and dronish the Answerer's

Answerer's charity, and pretended moderation has published us to the World) cannot only admit, but daily practise. And when he attempts the vindication of the four great Letters of his Brethrens Names, he uses the same act of fallacy as young Sophisters do with a Text of *Aristotle*, when they would force him to speak his Adversaries Language; or reconcile him to the Doctrines of that Philosophy he endeavours to refute; they unite all by a distinction or a Figure, when that aged Philosopher designed a quite contrary meaning. Thus, like an Archer, does he first fix his own mark, and then shoot his Darts at it: and yet, notwithstanding his enlarging it at pleasure, I find he has not alwaies hit the White; or if he did, it was so weakly, that the Dart made no impression; from whence I conclude, that though the Arrow may be well bearded, yet it wants a sharpe head.

Ald. *But I have heard, Sir, that a beard does not alwaies make a Philosopher.*

Vic. No, Sir, if it did, your Worship would have a large share, and incorporate Towns would prove Universities: Yet, for your comfort, when you shall read that part of the sober Answer which concerns the high and mighty Letters, you will find the

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Debater so close shaved, that the bigness of his Adversaries beards may appear, as if so be *Adoniram's* whole Tribe were concerned; and hair were of more value than brains; and a long beard were, like an Hedgehogs bristles, the best Weapons to defend them: A man would think that Arguments were to be encountred, and reasons compared in an answer to a Book, not beards measured; stopping mens mouths with numbers of years: especially when 666 is not in controversie, nor did any one say that those great Letters were the name of the Beast.

Ald. You seem, Mr. Vicar, to slight this Answer very much.

Vic. I am afraid, Sir, I honour it more than it really deserves, in mentioning of it to a Person of your Worth and Grandeur; or reflecting upon it in our private discourse: For its Author has great reason to fear that no body will trouble themselves for a publick Reply, lest they should only ventilate the Air, and encounter shadows; or go into their Studies only that they may catch flies. For alas! the Debates are such strange Forts, that they can neither be stormed, nor undermined, though we cannot say but that they are good at both; yet brazen-faces must be the only Canon that can possibly discharge

discharge with success against them, in a denial of plain matter of fact; and the Answerer himself has no way to decline it, but by the same Synecdoche, which is the Accusation of his Adversary. The greatest triumph that the Answer most boasts in; and the principal Trophée that adorns the discourse, is, where the Debater is supposed to come too near to the sacred Confines of Indemnity; and the Author would fain have the Act of Oblivion to dash out the memories of Mankind. 'Tis very like, though the Tragical History of former Actions would not have been banished the World (too much spread to be now recalled) yet had not the later actions of the persons whom *N. C.* does include, too much evidenced to Loyal Subjects, that former Methods were still remembred, and endeavoured again to be rendered practicable; their crimes might have been forgotten with the punishment, and an innocent obedience would have drawn a white Curtain over the reddest Characters of their Faults: But when we see Tumults and Schism still propagated to Posterity, why must not the Children bear the punishment of their Fathers, when they react their Parents sins? And when they are travelling in the same way in

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which their Ancestors rode Post, why must it be a violation of Charity to conjecture they are attempting the same journey? 'Tis true, indeed, their pretences are, like the Title to the Answer to the Two Debates, sober and peaceable; but their Actions are, like the Book it self, full of biting and devouring: and you know who betrayed his Master with a Kiss; and who it was that complained of his Enemy, that the words of his mouth were sweeter than Butter, but War was in his heart; his words were softer than Oyl, yet were they drawn Swords. I cannot Conjecture what this sober answer was wrote for, unless it were to justify that Expression which the Conformist, in the Debate, draws from his Adversaries Conference; that as there is a sanctified wit, so there is also a sanctified scurrility, and that Scripture Phrases are safest to express Satyrs and Sarcasmes. When your Worship shall view the Book it self, you need hardly put on your Spectacles, to see the same drolling and jerking that you feel in some other discourses; and what was written in smaller Characters in the two Debates, in the Answer you shall meet withal in the Text. Whoever were the Author of this Reply, I find that (in their own Phrase) he has the Spirit of Government upon him; and

and could not be less (surely) than the Head of a House, when the Author of the Debates was a poor Scholar, he makes him such an inconsiderable freshman ; and yet supposes *B.D.* to be his Title: which is more, I doubt (excepting a little Commencement by grace) than ever the Answerer could presume fairly to amount to : and 'tis not the opinion of a few, that a Batchelour of Divinity, that does his exercise, is a better man than a Cloke-bag Doctor ; whose Learning, sometimes, that entitles him to his Degree, is sealed up in his Mans Portmantle. But let the Debater be as poor a freshman as his Antagonist can either find, or make him ; I am sure he has more salt in his Pottage, than is to be met with in that pitiful punn, in *pag. 265.* of his Adversary ; where from *W. B's* Mels of Pottage he infers, that he has not only *Jus in re*, but *Jus ad rem* ; an unlawful quibble, and illegitimate off-spring (even according to the Masters of Wit) because two Languages, strangers to each other, are coupled together, to accomplish its generation. As for that pride and passion that he is willing to cast upon the Author of the Debates, his own Pen was so charged with it, that his Book has shot it back upon himself ; where, as if he had been at *Gresham* Colledge, and looked through

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through the new Invention (that so much magnifies that ingenious Society) upon both his own, and his Parties, worth; he has raised Mole-hills to sufficient Mountains, and stretched himself to a proportionable length, magnifying their heads to the bigness of Giants, when their brains will hardly give your poor Vicar so good a meal as those of a thin wasted Tythe-Pig. You may, perhaps Sir, have heard from a person that was lately in your company, that it was (not long ago) spoken of some persons in the World that they magnified only *culices, pulices, & scipfos*; he might have applied it to the very Answer that I here privately reflect upon: For verely I never saw any person, of his Adversaries Circumstances, handled with more distance and loftiness (though still declaiming against Pride;) but I see their old Maxime is propagated, of hating the name, and doing the thing. Thus do we hear, sometimes, a person, heated with Passion or Drink, swear by the Highest, that Swearing and Drunkenness will undo the Nation. But the only thing I am troubled at is, to find a man of such moderation (which, I know not whether in obedience to an Apostle, he is willing to make known unto all men) in the Head of a whole Party

as

as distant from his Principles as his seeming readiness for a compliance. Because there are some ejected Ministers (that have deserted the old Cause and Principle) in, or about, *London*, that are both peaceable and learned, that boldly harpe upon gracious Connivences ; does it thence follow, that all are to be complied with, that cannot be sheltered by that Character? 'Tis like the best of them are picked out to be a guard to that great City, where the Answer pretends (in all its canting and whining complaints) to be both their Magazine and Exchequer. But sure I am, that your Worship knows too well, that there is seldom Learning, and more rarely Peace and Modesty found among those Cattel we have to deal with in the Country : The Heads of Factions being, for the most part, proud, though illiterate ; stubborn, and disturbing, though neither possessed of gifts, or graces ; no, not so much as in those orders which the sober Answerer's Judgment has allowed (though we know not what interest and rendring a Party numerous may make practicable.) However here, your Worship knows, that men are advanced from Journey-men only to Shoemakers, or Tailors, to be Masters of Assemblies ; take Degrees without an University,

and

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and Commence Ministers, without so much as the approbation of one Lay Elder, or the least Limbe of the next Classis : Nay, the very Coblers themselves presume to go beyond their Lasts. Let not that sober Answerer then ever deceive your Worship with a Synecdoche, and cast a Figure that he may get us within its Circumference; for then he will easily comprehend and catch us. But I had almost forgotten one thing, that, being spread over the whole book, cannot but offend your nostrils; and that is a Box of Oyntment, with a dead Fly in it; which he having, by conjecture, daubed the two Debates with, presently cries out, the Books stink; but, upon perusal of the whole Answer, I perceive the Author has had also a lick himself, which made his breath, throughout his Book, to smell of it. He accuses the Debater for that he has intermixed a little folly, in commendation of himself, when he was before a man of great reputation both for wisdom and honour. Though I think this was sucking poyson out of Flowers; yet do I not perceive, by the Flies buzzing about mine ears, whilest I have the sober Answer before me, that its leaves shine with the same Oyntment: Do I not see both the Author and the Party varnished there, both with
Learning

Learning and Piety ? Do we not hear how patient they are in the midst of sufferings ; how chaste they are, now they are married, in opposition unto Batchellors who have no Wives ; how contented they are with never a Living, when their own folly and squeamishness threw them out, &c ? I thought once, by his similitudes, that he had been a Physician ; but by his Oyntment I perceive he would be a Chyrurgeon. Sir, had this person (whoever he be) modestly reprov'd the misunderstood faults of those Debates, and not been infected with his own reproof, you and I, that before honoured his person, with such respect as he pays to the Author of the Debates might (out of love to his Vertues) have covered his failings ; but since his own application may be applied to himself, *Turpe est doctori, &c.* I cannot be pleased with those Vices in another, which, I am convinced, I ought to mortifie in my self. Dialogues must have some Complements, though the same person is *Amanuensis* to both ; because they represent persons of divers circumstances and humours : But for a man to boast of himself in a continued Oration (as the Answerer does) would make even an old man blush, and *Herod* himself to become lousie and shrug. The other part
of

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of this learned book (costing him, as he saies, six weeks in writing, if he has not mistaken weeks for daies) bathes all its leaves in tears, in which perhaps there may be some salt, (however they were alwaies their best oratory) enough at least to season our Charity to those that are moderate and peaceable, so far as Law and Oaths permit : And I would willingly, out of my poor Vicaridge, (if any such be in a worse condition than my self) relieve what by reason of either their Opinion or practice may not be altered ; and with them both Conformity and Livings : And yet the Church (notwithstanding all their large Stories and elevated thoughts of their own abilities, could they be otherwise obliged to peace) is able to instruct her own Children, without the use of the Assemblies Catechism ; and yet never read some bodies Common-wealth to teach them policy for the propagation of Religion : 'Tis true, you must expect a whole Peale of Ordinance discharged in complaines of youth, and ignorance, of Pluralities, and Non-residence, (though *qui facit per alium, facit per se*) which yet, in their own time were extant with an *Imprimatur*, by their Authority, who, for their own sakes, now decry them : Witness the Picture of an old man (since dead)

dead) with a great bundle of Steeples at his back, who having discoursed against Pluralities, and his Arguments being retorted upon himself, had nothing but a distinction betwixt the Profits and Presentation to save him from his own Sword : But I suppose that those persons, even now adaies, whose merit or interest have rendred Pluralists, if they might but be secured of the profits, they would not think it repugnant to their concerns, if the Patrons had the keeping of the Presentations. And as for that youth and ignorance (so much stomached, for nothing more probably than because they are not, as in the late times, conjoynd together) we are accused of ; The Church of *England* could not be charged with any thing more unlucky to the Non-conformists than the youth of their Ministers ; when (if recrimination might be pardoned) we need not look back past the memory of the youngest Priest, to hear the little Lapwings crying, which when they were seen, had the shells upon their heads, and a white list round their crowns : And, as if they came only to see the University, and make their Horses proceed Graduates for their Masters, upon a sudden, having put *St. Maries* dull Notes into Characters, and themselves in *Querpo*, became

great

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great Propagators of the Gospel; when their Preachment, all this while, was but only a Chappel Repetition, their Confidence was their greatest gift, and strong Lungs the grace that approved them. We have not yet forgotten the Triars, that used to usurp *White-Hall*, who, being seated near the Banquetting-house, and by Presentation of others, being informed of the fall of good Livings, would be sure to make a feast for themselves; and then others, perhaps, might partake of their leavings: How did they make Babes in years presently to commence Babes in Grace? and then, as if their Seal of Office had been that of the Spirit, they advanced these Puppies to Junior Apostles, and gave them Commission both to plant, and gather Churches: Nor would it be a violation of that gracious and indulgent Act of Oblivion, to remember those pretty tricks those Touchstones had, by which they starved the old Conformists. But I hate to mind your memory of that which your Worship cannot possibly forget. And as for the ignorance of the younger part of our present Clergy, if the Replier to the Debates did but stoop his gravity to converse with them, he would find them not ignorant of his Devices; and I may confidently affirm without smelling to his
his

his Box of ointment, that generally, in the time of the sober mans peaceable reign, there was not the tythe of that learning that now is to be met with in young Divines. It should seem, by the grave Answerer's sober handling him, that the Debater himself is not very old; and yet, methinks, the wise Respondents falling upon him, is but like the Limbe of an old decayed and wind-shaken Tree dropping down upon a spiny oak, endeavouring to come up under him; when one would think the greatness of the Limbe should crush and bruise the younger Tree, his own rottenness breaks him to pieces. If one would have Old age revered, the best way is not to despise Youth; for those that may be young in years, are sometimes elders in Office. If I had been (in anothers place) at the elbow of this sober Answerer, when his Pen was pouring out this Complaint, with so much Gall in his Inke; I would have remembred him, that *Timothy* was a Bishop when he was young, and that smooth-faced *St John* was the Disciple whom Jesus loved: Young *Melancthon*, however, might have jogg'd his elbow, and obtained leave, without prejudice, I hope, to himself or Party, to have encountred an old Devil, though he complains he was too hard for

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him;

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him; and though (Mr. Alderman) I cannot be so unjust to the World as to list my self in this number, lest I should lick up the sober man's ointment, and what is worse, anothers praise; yet this I must tell you of others in the World; that no Church need be ashamed, when they are numbred amongst her Officers. To name men would be ridiculous for me, who you know have little other acquaintance than with names in the Tittle Page of a few borrowed Books: And besides, to name young Divines would be an affront to *W. B.* which very letters the sober Answer has made sacred; though (if I do not mistake my information) they make up almost his own name. But why do I trouble my self, or you, with what does not much concern us? Old age and Youth may well agree, whilst the former does not provoke, and the latter does not become disobedient; If new-built houses have green Walls, yet old ones are more full of Vermine. Let old mens discourses be grave and wise, full of matter and experience; yet young ones will sometimes be accounted good Preachers: both have their great use in the Church, and if old Trees are best to burn, yet younger are the fittest for building. There is, Sir, one charge more remaining, which I cannot

cannot but give your **W**orship an account of; and that is, where the sober Answer (as if it would plainly evidence it self a more improper Title than the Friendly Debate) supposes, according to his moderation and charity, that the Debater himself is almost an **A**theist, and his Books the grand destruction of Religion. If Christianity suffers by such discourtes, he may thank himself, and that wild Party which this sober man does now head, for being the causes and provokers of them, by their Enthusiastical Practices, and enormous Extravagancies. But withal, it cannot but be a Paradox to me, that truth is not established by the refutation of falsehood; or that the purging a disease must alwaies be death to the Patient. Cannot the Excrescencies, or dead branches, be pruned off, without digging up the tree by the roots; or the weeds be taken out of a Garden, without pulling up the flowers too? 'Tis strange (methinks) that Atheism must undermine Religion, if that which falsely wears both its name and leaves has but a root or two loosened, or its leaves shaken off, by a smart wind, that the naked limbes and body may appear: Never let us fear that glorious Tree, which bringeth forth fruit unto holiness here, and in the end Everlasting life,

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will the sooner die, but revive, and flourish much the more for the taking away these Suckers; and when they are grown so big and numerous as to take away the greatest part of the trees nourishment, the pruning-hook will not then pare them off, but a sharp Axe must encounter them. But in nothing is the Replier more unjust and weak, than in loading his Adversary with suppositions of Atheism: For this is like the womens duells, who, when they are able to fight no longer, call each other by ugly names; and just like a Country-man, or those sometimes that are more Worshipful, if they hear an Anabaptist or Quaker talk but a small piece of sense, they presently declare him to be a Jesuit, as if these were the only Masters of an Argument: Let not wise men run into the same snare by terming rational persons Atheists, as if they were the only men of reason. Some men must be drolled asleep, when Reason and Argument cannot silence them; and a more airy discourse may be fitter for some to breathe in, than knotty Arguments, and brave harangues; and those, whom Reason will not convince, may sometimes be jock'd into obedience: Tender Children must be rocked in Cradles, when labouring men will sleep upon the ground.

But

But whither have I run my self into this Book, and given interruption to our farther discourse? I will lend you the Book it self ere long, and send for the Answer if the Debater will trouble himself to reply: By this however I conclude to my self, that this Book is not an Answer to the Debates, and notable in nothing but the greatness of its Adversary.

Ald. Well, Sir, I thank you for this general account that you have given of this Diana, which the whole Party cries up for great: It may be all true, being rightly understood, that you have said. And since you have so well confirmed me in that Subject, to the end I may the better be enabled to satisfy others, I shall expect you will lend me the Answer. In the mean time, I shall be beholding to you, if you will be so kind as to resume your former discourse, wherein you promised to rectify my description of Conscience by one more pertinent of your own.

Vic. That, Sir, I shall most readily do; and question not from a right description thereof to convince you fully, that those persons, we are now treating of, have none at all.

Ald. I cannot but long to hear it, Sir.

Vic. Conscience, then, is nothing else, but

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the agreement of my knowledge with Gods.

Ald. *But, suppose you should meet with one, whose Principles are repugnant to yours, that will not receive your description without proof? For this being (as it seems to me) a Point of very great concernment, it requires briefly to be proved, and explained.*

Vic. I thank your Worship for minding me of that, which, I hope, will fully ease your thoughts of all your scruple of the Fanaticks being such consciscious men. Will you have your proof from Scripture, or reason?

Ald. *Scripture, Sir, by all means; for if, at any time in my discourses with them, I do, by chance, speak reason, they silence that Argument with clamours and outcries, that reason is carnal.*

Vic. Well then (though I thought our Reason had been the greatest Character that distinguishes us from beasts, and had been given us to be our Director, and a better guide than what our Adversaries call Conscience) I shall gratifie you at this time in your desire; that so when you meet with any of them again, you may be able both to defend your self, and wound them, and yet give them the choice of their weapons.

Ald. *Why,*

Ald. *Why, you do not think I trow that we will dispute at sharps?*

Vic. No, Sir, not with persons that are so well lined, and are your Customers too; but my speech was only Metaphorical, and that may be a lawful way of discourse if it be explained, since a Nonconformist prayed that his desires and affections might soar aloft, and lest God Almighty should, through defect of Rhetorick, mistake the Figure, and translate him to heaven, before he had a mind to leave the World, he presently informed him, that it was a Metaphor, Lord, taken from a bird.

Ald. *I perceive you must ever now and then have your excursions; I am afraid your long and tedious imployment has made your invention quite barren, that it thus brings forth nothing but weeds.*

Vic. No wonder at all, Sir, when I am endeavouring to pluck up Thistles, that they should shed some seed in carriage, as well as leave their prickles in my fingers. But if my Phansie has brought forth weeds, it is not because the ground is worn out, but because you have slept, whilst the Enemy has sown it with Tares; yet, I dare say, when the harvest comes, in the Judgment of all, I may be able to measure corn with you,

N 4 and

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and yet give you many grains of allowance.

Ald. You talked to me concerning figures but now; yet I had rather have words at length.

Vic. Did I but exactly know your measure, I could easily cut them proportionably, but, I suppose, your Worship may be affraid to produce it, lest it should incur the danger of the Statute. Would you have my Expressions proportioned to the length of a Presbyterian hour-glass, or independent Incomes, or out-goings?

Ald, I mean no other, by that Phrase, than to desire you to express your self without a Riddle, and tell me what Conscience is, and how you can prove your definition?

Vic. I have already given you my apprehension of Conscience, that it is, when a mans knowledge agrees with Gods.

Ald. But how do you prove that from Scripture?

Vic. Because that Word, which in the New Testament is used for Conscience, denotes the very same expression.

Ald. Pray what is that?

Vic. It is συνείδησις, which is derived from σύν, which signifies with, or together, and εἶδέναι, or εἰδέναι, scio, cognosco, to know; and cannot

cannot be Englished but by a Periphrasis, or circumlocution (as we commonly say) and is, *cum alio scientia*, a knowledge with another : But relating to divine matters, it must needs represent a knowledge together with God. God being first acquainted with the Precepts and Laws, which he intended to give forth unto mankind, from hence exhibites his Rules unto the World, by which they are to regulate their lives; and, by the same Law, measures the legality, or illegality of our Actions; And upon the view and consideration of these Prescriptions and Rules, by the help of our apprehensions and reason, we know together with God, and this Act is called Conscience.

Ald. Then, it seems, that is only Conscience, when our apprehensions and opinions of things fully accord with Gods Word.

Vic. Your Notion of it, Sir, is in this fully expressed sutable to my meaning ; and indeed it is no more than a practical understanding, and opinion of things, as they really are; for it can be no other than the application of our knowledge, gained from God's revealed will, to the things which we think, speak, or do.

Ald. But how can this Doctrine of Conscience accord with those various Titles that Divines usually

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usually bestow upon it, of Witness, Judge, and the like?

Consc: *Vic.* That, Sir, proceeds only from the various application of our knowledge. As first, when we remember and reflect upon what we have, or have not done, so Conscience is stiled a Witness. Secondly, When, in our retirements, we judge something fit to be done, or not to be done; and hence Conscience is said to oblige, or bind, to instigate, or provoke. Lastly, When we pass Sentence upon our Actions, arraigning them at our own internal Bar, and conclude them either good or evil; here Conscience acts the part of a Judge, whilst it passes a Sentence of condemnation, or acquittance; and from hence arise all those troublesome convulsions, that proceed from the Arrainment and Sentence, and those ravishing joyes that spring from the benefit of an absolution.

Ald. *I need not enquire now for the inference designed, that those, who plead the outcries of Conscience, against Publick Authority, and the Laws of the Land, by this making their very vices consciencious; that they have (I say) no conscience at all; because their disobedience to the higher Powers, in assembling in Numbers larger than what the Laws allow, does not proceed from God's Word, at which the*
Candle

Candle of their knowledge ought alwaies to be lighted, if they intend to plead Conscience for their Actions. And therefore, for the future, I shall not permit so frivolous an Objection to scare me from my duty, into the horrid and damning sin of Perjury.

Vic. Really, Sir, I have made it my business to cast away some of my vacant hours, in Society with these men, on purpose to understand their humours; and I have not only found, that, when times were to them prosperous, they were as inclinable to those Vices which are now admired, as most of those which now run to the utmost extremity (only ours do it in the face of the Sun, and they were wont to secure themselves by the silence of their company, or secrecie of the place; for that may be done in a private Conventicle which is not to be enterprised in the open Market, and there is no iniquity in a Tribe of *Israel* though the same Actions are to be condemned in the *Canaanites*.) But I have observed most of their Religion to proceed from the defects of their disposition, and the accomplishments of their minds, to be, for the most part, the diseases of their bodies: Unless where sometimes interest, or malice, summons their abilities to uphold a Party. Thus will they account that man's
heart

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heart humbled for his sins, whose head is disturbed to lunacy and madness ; when Passion, and Fury boiles over, in scurrilous and railing Phrases, and Expressions, 'tis nothing but the godly heat of Zeal, which, fire was brought from heaven to enkindle ; when a Preacher has an unusual dulness, and is fain to groan, to make a Parenthesis, to fill a wide Chasm in his discourse, this is called Preaching feelingly ; and when want of matter, or barrenness of Phrase forces them to many pauses in their Prayers, and Lord, Lord, must stop gaps, and fence inclosures ; this must proceed from holy Admiration, and divine Extasie. When they begin their Prayers soft, and whispering, as if they would keep God Almighty to themselves, with one eye open, and the other shut, and now and then a wise shrug with the shoulders, or a white and innocent goggle with the eye ; this proceeds from awe, and dread, whilest they are beginning to be familiar with their Maker : some of them wink fast in their Prayers, as if that Spirit, they pretend then to be so full of, would steal out at their eyes ; or else those Sponges would not effectually yield tears, unless they should be well squeezed. Have you not seen one of those dull fellows make wry faces, like one that has
had

had an hard stoole, and drawn his Sparrow mouth to his ears, as if he expected a fresh prompter?

Ald. *You seem to make all their Religion nothing but a cheat.*

Vic. Truly, if their Religion consists in such actions, I can assure you, these are no better. God deliver me from such Juglers in Divinity, that can disgorge nothing but inkle and fillers, that have more length in them, than breadth, or thickness. Shall Hegme and melancholy, be any longer accounted Communion with God; and Dens of Thieves become the only Houses of Prayer? I could wish them all at the Isle of Pines; where, gendering with the Air, they might both mind Generation-work, and get fleet Courfers for Itinerants, that might be very acceptable to those new-spawn'd Zealots.

Ald. *But why, Mr. Vicar, do you so strangely conclude that most of the Fanaticks Religion is founded in the temperament of their bodies?*

Vic. Because every man may find, by his own experience, that when, in a melancholy fit, he takes one of their Authours, and reads a little, the Book presently suits with his temper, and he is pleased then with those Gourds and Mushrooms, that a bright Sun presently withers.

Ald. *But*

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Ald. But 'twill certainly be a false Inference, to make a general Conclusion from a man's own particular temper and inclination.

Vic. And yet this is what they alwaies did, when they posted their dreams for certain Visions, and made their own experiences (as they called them, when they were but the effects of their present temper, and disposition of body) signs of trial, and marks of sacred scrutiny and examination.

Ald. But you (that it seems have more than ordinarily enquired into their waies and methods) espying their folly, should not be caught in the same snare, nor make your particular experience a sufficient indictment, upon which you may arraign, and condemn so many, as if their different dispositions were the greatest cause of their different opinions.

Vic. I do not make an universal conclusion, nor is any Rule so general, but that it admits of some Exception; yet it is a shrewd Character by which you may discern those of that Party which believe what they hold, and are serious, as well as zealous in their persuasion. And to render this conjecture something probable, view the Multitudes, and as Towns have their greatest proportions

tions and numbers, where the Air is not so clear and wholesome, so, even amongst those, you have (besides women, whom Affection and Passion sway more than Argument and Reason) remarked, that, in such places, the greater number consists of those that have sedentary Trades, or Handicrafts men, that keep close to their Houses, and Shops, and have not often either the diversion or benefit of society and company: Hence came the Weavers, Tailors, Clothiers, Combers, Shoemakers, and Coblers, and the like, to advance from the Loom and Stall to the Pulpit, and become persons of such eminent gifts; because they living obscure, and retired, where they had converse only with themselves, melancholy gaining the predominancy in their humours, they gave themselves over, like drunken men, to discourse only of Policy and Religion; and because they could not be Rulers on the one hand, they endeavoured to be accounted something on the other, and espouse that which most suited with their melancholy and retirement.

Ald. But I have seen, some of that party, as merry souls as ever I would desire to accompany with.

Vic. I shall readily grant that, from mine own

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own observation ; but then, if you observe, they are such as are leading men in their Society, and espouse that interest only for their own honour and wealth : Or else they are some Covenanting Parsons, that relinquished their Benefices upon the Act of Uniformity, because they were ashamed to conform, who had been so violent in the late times ; or perhaps persons of such mean learning, that they knew they should have no preferment in our Church ; or lastly, those that being either by surprisal, or through hopes of some toleration and allowance, or finally, who by the familiarity and combination of some leading men of that Party, for companies sake, deserted their Livings, and so perhaps might unwarily be Ejected, who now, being vexed for their unadvised losses, envy those that were more prudent and wise ; and out of hate and malice, to the present possessours, propagate opinions, to the detriment of our Church, and for supporting the Schism.

Ald. Have you found any, then, that, by the example of others, forsaking their Livings, do now repent of their rash action ?

Vic. Yes ; I know those that were, alwaies, in the worst of times, not only repugnant to those loose devotions, but alwaies seemed inclinable to the ancient ; that yet,
by

by the example of others, and the great interest they had in them, were piteously fooled out of their Benefices; that were but little concerned in the support of that Party, who now, being irrecoverably lost, are great Zealots against Common Prayer, who, before that black *St. Bartholomews* day, did not only afford their presence and devotion to the Liturgy of the Church, but also read it themselves, before its imposition. *Lit.*

Ald. Well, Sir, you have fully satisfied me in this particular, concerning the Conscience of those men, against whom my Oath, as a Justice of the Peace, obliges me to put the Laws in execution; for I am satisfied that their deportment is not according to the Scripture Rule; and therefore they cannot, in reason, plead Conscience for their actions; since a mans opinion, or judgment of things, is not an Argument, convictive enough, to justify his Principles, or his Actions, and Deportment, that flow from such a corrupted Fountain. But they pretend to the Spirit of God, and that they have a secret testimony for the unlawfulness of our present devotions, and service, and the legality, and justice of their own.

Vic. I am very joyful, that your Worship is apprehensive of the reasonableness of the former Point, and that your Conscience is
O *satisfied*

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satisfied concerning it self, as also the vanity of their Consciences that pretend most to this Principle. And indeed, for the most part, a Fanaticks Conscience (if a Tradesman) is his Custom and Gain, if a Teacher, honour and maintenance, and a satisfaction of his eager humour of Passion, and Malice. And as this Plea of theirs will, to the reasonable part of mankind, appear empty and insufficient: So, from the very same grounds upon which their Conscience is refuted, shall I also manifest, that their pretenses to the Spirit, and that ever blessed and sacred testimony, is no less a cheat also.

Ald. If you can do that too, certainly you will perswade me to be resolute in the discharging the duties of mine Office and Trust, against all opposition whatsoever: Nor shall either present fear, or a melancholy praevision of future danger, ever be able to divert mine intentions, from a full execution of the Kings Laws.

Vic. That I may attempt that task then, which I perceive your Worship thinks almost impossible to be accomplished; I shall shew you an absurdity, or two, that will follow from their supposal of the testimony of the Spirit. But, before I do that, give me leave to invalidate this pretended testimony
of

of theirs unto you from what you have before granted.

Ald. *Pray do so; for I shall not prescribe your method of conviction.*

Vic. You believe, Sir, that neither their Principles, nor Actions, that make up their cause of Schism and difference from us are to be proved from Scripture.

Ald. *No surely: For if I did, I were both impious and irrational, if I were not wholly of their opinion and practice.*

Vic. Then trouble your self no further, for they cannot have the testimony of the Spirit.

Ald. *I do not see the necessity of this consequence, nor how your Argument can possibly confute them.*

Vic. No? It is strange to me, that you, who have shewed your self, throughout this Discourse, so sagacious, and subtil in your judgment, and apprehension, should not perceive the consequence here.

Ald. *Truly, methinks, I am a stranger to it.*

Vic. I will endeavour to make this Conclusion well acquainted with your Worships Premisses. Since the Fanaticks Principles, and apparent Schism, according to your own confession, are not to be proved by the Word

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of God. The Spirit of God cannot give its testimony to those Principles, because it never witnesses contrary to the revealed Word, for that were to contradict it self; since the Scripture was given forth by the inspiration of the Spirit.

Ald. I now very well apprehend this reason, and, indeed, by all Laws and Methods of arguing, should (as I have heard) desist from prosecuting this Objection any further : But, because you promised to discover some absurdities necessarily arising from their Affirmation that they have the testimony of the Spirit, that I may be able to refute their bold and strange Opinions, I must urge you further to produce them.

Vic. The first is then, if they have the testimony of the Holy Spirit, for the Doctrines that they deliver, and the Actions which they practise, then their Sermons had been Canonical, and their Actions infallible : and thus might not only the Deity it self be made a Liar, and men be metamorphosed into all these strange and monstrous shapes by a Law, that has Heavens Seal for its authority, and enforcement; but Rebellion and Treason would become Canonical too; and the foundations of the Earth would be out of course, Peace and Charity be perpetually disturbed, and

and an Eternal Schism and Separation maintained from inspired President, and Bible Examples.

Ald. *How so?*

Vic. Because, Sir, we have no other assurance of the truth of Scriptures, which are the Canon and Rule of Life, but because the Spirit of God has given its Testimony, not only by inspiring their first Publishers, but by Miracles that are without the power of Natures attempts; and, by this Testimony, out-dated the Law, which was before established, by the same Sanction: therefore if other Doctrines might have the same Testimony, I see no reason but they must become Canonical, and of the same Authority with the Scriptures themselves; since those were but the Doctrines and Writings of men inspired; to the truth and confirmation of which, the holy Spirit gave its Divine Testimony, and thus passed them into Canons and Rules.

Ald. *I apprehend the strength of this Consequence, and methinks it should be sufficient to baffle all their bold pretensions: We should then be rarely governed indeed, if each of them might speak Canons.*

Vic. Although your Worship cannot but know that their mouths are of sufficient bore,

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and big enough to cast Canons ; yet their Mettall is not equally tempered for such work, which was the cause why their Pieces flew about their own ears, not only striking off the Tipsof some, but filling their heads with such an unusual noise, that they have ever since been troublesome to Mankind, and run about, like so many Knight Errants, encountering not only flocks of Sheep, instead of Armies, but fight with Windmils, instead of Giants ; when the Champions are only *entia rationis*, wrapped about in Logick breeches, gendered by the wind, that lodges in the Caverns of their Authors brains.

Ald. *It seems then, by your discourse, if a man would draw the Picture of one of their Itinerants, it must be Don Quixot riding upon Rosinante.*

Vic. I did not think your Worship had so excellent a phansie for Limning : there is not only colour in your similitude, but proportion too ; only you forgot to have a Regiment of *Sancho's* attending on him.

Ald. *Well, Sir, be the Picture what it will, it cannot (as far as I perceive by your discourse) be worse than the Pattern : But let not our intermediate mirth steal away that little time which remains, so far as to give too much interruption to our more serious discourse :
Pray*

Pray inform me of some other absurdity that follows our wild mens pretensions to the testimony of the Spirit.

Vic. If their Testimony of the Spirit were true, then the most just Precepts of the Gospel would be cancelled: for the latter Law repeals the former, which is opposite to it; and they establishing their own Doctrine, which we both acknowledge to be repugnant to the Gospel, and the Injunctions and Commands of persons then sufficiently inspired; the Doctrine of Christ, and his blessed Apostles, will lose both its force and obligation, if Heaven should seal the Doctrines of these men by that sacred testimony which they pretend to.

Ald. God deliver me from such impostors; these indeed have a fine way to set up new Christs, and new Gospels, or whatever they please to establish.

Vic. 'Tis very true, Sir; however if some had the hearing of our discourse, it would sound harsh, and they would look upon us as reprobates and castaways.

Ald. Surely none but such as you were speaking of, but now, who having lost their ears, might have their hearing so far impaired, that, their sense being frightened into the brain, it may be so much inwards, that they under-

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*stand little besides what themselves speak:
Such ears can only be grated with our discourses, that are either raw, or else newly skinn'd over.*

Vic. Alas! Sir, you are not, I perceive, acquainted with the Gentlemen we are speaking of; though by the Picture, you shewed me just now, I am convinced you are well seen in their faces; Some of their ears are as tender as their Consciences, being cut into just shape and form.

Ald. *He warrant these are busie men.*

Vic. As busie as a Spider when he is making his Web to catch Flies, they walk like Footmen: And there are some of them, that, now Nature has beat out all their teeth, gnash at the Bishops with their gums; that would reduce them to beggery, to teach them humility, and make them poor, that they may use Hospitality: As if the whole Nation were grown so bankrupt, that they could not pay their debts on Earth, unless they forced Heaven to a surrender; and we could not sufficiently abhor Idolls, unless we committed Sacriledge.

Ald. *Metinks such persons, whose brains are, like the restless Sea, in a perpetual motion, not only when driven by a storm, but also when the heavens are serene, should out of policy*

policy be set about some employments, that should be so laborious, as to keep them in business without any interruption, that so they might not have sufficient time to shake Foundations, and undermine Government.

Vic. I wish they were locked up with the Records of the Tower, or put upon inventing a way to pay off all the Sea-forces of *France* without the sale of Cathedral Lands. I verily perswade my self, that these men will be angry at death when it comes, and go to their very graves murmuring; nay, will mutiny also in the other world, if misery and torment does not restrain them.

Ald. Indeed we have for a long time exercised lenity and mercy towards them, and, as far as I perceive, it does but make them the more rude, and insolent, prone alwaies not only to speak evil of dignities, but to actual Rebellion and Insurrections; and therefore I verily believe that *Sathan* himself will have no way to tame them, but by fire and faggot.

Vic. Methinks, if they had but any grains of modesty, if they would (according to *St. Pauls* Rule) have their faith to themselves, and not meet together in such vast numbers, as if they were resolved to affront Authority, and make the best part of the Nation continually full of dreads and fears;

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I could be contented (because we would not have so much to do with them, as at all to acquaint them how hell will hereafter restrain their Mutinies) that they should be undisturbed.

Ald. Why ? As far as I understand, no body endeavours, or ever did attempt, in the Protestant Religion, to compell any mans understanding or faith.

Vic. In this, Sir, we are all for that Catholick Charity so much voted for, by those Consciences that have the largest dimensions; for we know that it is impossible to impose upon the understandings of men, which must be perswaded first of the truth of those things which they will be induced to credit, and believe : But then only do our Canons and Laws begin to be severe, and punish persons of different perswasions from the established Creed ; when their belief produces such actions as are prohibited, and repugnant to the known Laws of the Realm. And truly, if that great Wheel of Humane Policy, that turns round the Affairs of Mankind, should ever prove a rack to that Religion which we now profess ; I should heartily thank God, and those Rulers that my Obligation subjected me to, if I might but enjoy what our discontented Party have
now

now free liberty by a Law, not only to practise mine own Religion by my self, and in Society with mine own Family, but to meet together with Neighbours also to the number of five: For where two or three are gathered together, according to our Saviour's appointment, and establishment, there he has promised to be in the midst of them.

Ald. Indeed, upon that very score, and permission, I see no reason why the Non-conformists should be so mutinous, as still to murmur at their restraints, and think not only the Laws cruel, but the very Rulers themselves an insupportable burden.

Vic. That, Sir, proceeds from their peevish Principle, not to be satisfied with any indulgence; for, if you call to mind their former methods in his late Majesties Reign, they were never satisfied with his largest Concessions, 'till they forced away both his Crown and Kingdom; the continual grant of any Petition, being but an encouragement to frame another; one Conquest being but the Prologue to another Tragedy: and when they began to unveil the Temple, and touch its Roof, they never put a period to their work, as long as one stone was left upon another.

Ald. Truly,

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Ald. Truly, I am affraid, the method would be the same now; for methinks the present attempts look a little like forty and forty one.

Vic. The more necessity there is of your Worships assistance, to break what cannot well be dissolved; for as some natures are so ingenuous, that lenity and entreaty are the only means to reduce them to sobriety and duty; so others are so morose, and ill natured, that severity can only Hecor them to obedience.

Ald. You have proceeded so far already towards my full conviction, that I verily believe, I shall not much dispute of the method, but act according to the direction of the Laws, and obligation of mine Oath. But yet that I may be able as well to argue them, at least, to silence, if not satisfaction, as to punish their Crimes in such violent and notorious breach of the Laws; I must further enquire, whether there may not be any more absurdities that are consequential to that bold pretence of these men to the infallible testimony of the blessed Spirit of God? which you have already informed me, makes their strange Notions to become Canonical, and invalidates the great design of the Gospel.

*Vic. This boldness of theirs, that has no
Miracle*

Miracle at all to confirm it, seems to all rational men, that preserve their reason untainted by sense to guide them in the midst of such variety, and rubbish of Religions, at first audit, not only to be of such ill consequence, but impious too; that I needed but only to have repeated the Problem, and the very mention of it would have proved its own refutation. Yet, at your desire, I shall mention one more amongst a multitude of absurdities, that naturally flows from this strange Doctrine; and that is, that we must be continual Sceptricks in Religion, and our way to heaven, will be as uncertain as the wind, or as our own dreams, or conjectures.

Ald. Pray, Sir, let me a little desire the explanation of this.

Vic. Since various complexions are of divers temperaments, and the manners of the mind do too strictly attend upon the temperament of the body, it must needs be, that, according to the variety of faces and dispositions, the operations of the mind must not only be distinct, but divers: Thus as in external sense the object differs according to the diversity of those Organs it makes its percussions upon; and whatsoever is received, is introduced according to the capacity of the recipient;

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recipient; so will it be in relation to the mind; this will either be guided by sense, and so the motions of the understanding will be as fluctuating and uncertain as the vibrations of a trembling or shaking sense: or secondly, Education may prove the only ground of belief, and then our Religion may be as vain as our Education either loose or Fanatical; or else capacities (admitting an equality of perfection in rational souls) may be exceeding different in the proportions of their extent, as well as the manner of apprehension, and reception; the Images of things, in some brains, being lively and distinct, make more exact perceptions of Objects; in others, being more obscure, broken, and crumbled into smaller Fragments, and diseases and indispositions of body making too great a sickness in the minds of men, had they no other Rule than what they conjecture a motion from the Spirit, either to confirm or guide their opinions and actions; every phantse or conjecture that men were possessed of, that made any lasting impression upon the mind, would presently become a rule and guide to Religion; and thus not only would there be as many Faiths almost as there are Judgments in the World, but as many Religions as men: Nay, every man would

would differ from himself, and change his faith as often as either the temper of his body should suffer mutation, or, the figures and shapes in his brains be changed, either by the introduction of new objects, or mutiny and disorder of the old Images in dreams, or diseases: Add to all this, that divers waies do converse, interests, and other accidents, make strange impressions, and mutations on the minds of men. And as you will cease to wonder at that variety of fancies, which men, that espouse such uncertain directors, continually, not only cherish, but vent and propagate; so you will sufficiently perceive the great delusion of those that thus pretend the Testimony of the Spirit to raise storms in their own brains, and then say that this wind blows: Thus making the Spirit of God, to whom we owe our everlasting bliss, as far as the indictment of Scripture conduces to it, not only the Author of variety, but contradiction.

Ald. *How so?*

Vic. Your Worship may not ask me this question, since you need not ride abroad to a forein Conventicle for an answer to it; but you have daily examples at home: For you are not ignorant, I am sure, both by your trade and acquaintance, of that diversity of
Sects

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Sects we have within the compass of this Town: they all pretend the Spirit's Testimony, as a seal and confirmation of their opinions, and practices; and yet they differ as much from one another, as all together do from us.

Ald. But, methinks, they seem lately to be more united, courteous and kind to each other; therefore I believe their breaches are made up, and their differences healed.

Vic. I cannot, Sir, obstruct your belief, any other way than by perswasion, and argument: But certainly you cannot possibly make a more visible distinction betwixt us and them, than they make betwixt them and themselves: For they are different from each other even to a separation, and therefore the divers Sects have their divers Teachers, and pretended Ministers; their Doctrines and Modes of Worship are divers, their Churches (as they call them) and Communion distinct: only in their civil converse they are something more courtly and complementary to each other, than formerly they were.

Ald. What should be the reason of that?

Vic. Alas, Sir, that may be smelled at a distance, and seen almost by a blind man: You know, similitude is the foundation of affection and friendship, and there must
be

be a Fitness and resemblance in the bodies, or some similitude and likeness in the minds, where a League of Friendship and amity is struck : There must be a conveniency betwixt the persons to satiate each others longings and desires, and to accomplish the end that is desired. Now these divers Sects, that separate from our true, though dejected, Church, have some resemblance and similitude in diverse of their Principles, and can discourse altogether in the same mournful, and sad tone, and canting phrases, of some things that they all agree in ; and in their different Tenents, with a wary caution with those, among them, which are most politick, or at least with a seeming pity and compassion ; which the advantage of their lamenting speech gives a great countenance to : They are alike also in their complexions ; for an hatcher face, and a dejected eye, with a white Cap, to make the head diseased, when the body is well, are things that they endeavour all to imitate ; and a sneaking deportment, and Hermaphrodite garbe, are more sure signs of these men, than any their Preachers usually lay down for them to know which Party they belong to : Add this too (which more closely unites them) that there is a similitude in their seeming affections,

P being

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being all condemned by one Law, all slighting the Act of Uniformity, all subject to the Penalties of those Statutes that concern Conventicles, and unlawful Assemblies: Nay, lastly, if you reflect upon this, that they all agree in the dearly beloved sin of Rebellion, warring only an opportunity of revenge, you will not wonder, that they, who are so different in some Principles, should yet be kind, and hold a more strict correspondence with one another: For they well know, that one Party of them must in vain attempt, either by disputes, or force, to set themselves at liberty, and bring us into bonds and slavery; and therefore they will unite all their Forces. Besides (finally) by this feigned union of theirs, they would endeavour to set us a pattern of Toleration for them; since the Presbyterian can now accord with the Independent, and Anabaptist; that so our Charity may be as Catholick as their Rebellion.

Ald. And do you think they unite for such ends as these?

Vic. As sure as we are now discoursing, For, first, hereby they seem a Party so numerous and momentous, that they have adventured, in some of their Papers and Pamphlets, to affrighten Authority, and dissuading the
Supreme

Supreme Power from executing the Laws, by the Club Argument of their power and force; and when thus they have assaulted us with amazement, and fear, will they attempt to do that by rebellion, which I hope they will never effect by entreaty, to put Swords into such enemies hands, and be the Authors of our own execution.

Ald. *But, methinks, you are something confident in these matters, I would not have you charge men with what you cannot well prove.*

Vic. I shall not, Sir, be so disingenuous: But when the same Religions, the same Methods, nay, for a great part the same men too, have formerly, by such tricks as these, brought the Nation into a noose, ruined both Prince and Subject, and all with as great a pretense of Sanctity, and holy cheat, as they can possibly now be guilty of; Shall we permit these very persons to come again to cut our throats, canting and shedding tears over us, 'till, like the Crocodile, they have quite devoured us? Let us have a care, Sir, lest we so long indulge their Idols, 'till they sacrifice, not only our Estates, but, our very blood to them.

Ald. *But all this is nothing but presumption.*

Vic. Would you have an actual proof of
P 2 what

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what is now only in design, and a future opportunity must give birth to? It will be no absurdity to tell you that a great probability (abating for the terms) is what men frequently call demonstration. But what do you think of this observation, which methinks renders their design of War and Rebellion too apparent? That though they adhere, and are kind to all the rest of our numerous Sects,

Q. yet the poor Quakers have little interest in their familiarity, or affection

Ald. *What should they be rejected for? Methinks they are some of the most innocent amongst them.*

Vic. They are persons, Sir, of very infectious Principles, though their outward converse seems innocent. But the reason of their rejection is this. Because they protest against fighting, and so are not fit for the design.

Ald. *Do you think the Quakers will not fight?*

Vic. Yes, why not, as well as they have done? But because the resolutions of men, in affairs of this nature, can only be known by their Letters, and Discourses, the other Parties dare not trust them with the knowledge or management of so close and bloody a design: Besides, they are assured, when
themselves

themselves are in a body, the Quakers will either joyn with them, or stand neuter : And so their Plot will not be hindred by them, unless their familiarity, or Society with them should by accident render them conscious to the Conspiracy.

Ald. *But, methinks, I should not trust these very Quakers with Swords in their hands, notwithstanding all their fair pretensions.*

Vic. No, Sir, if you had been a witness to what I once saw, which, indeed, though it convinced me that they would fight when provoked to it, yet methought was a little pleasant to look upon.

Ald. *Præthee what was that ?*

Vic. I hapned once where a Quaker and another person had a verbal difference, and after their manner proceeding to a dispute ; the Quakers Antagonist asked him whether he would be true to his Principles in relation to the enduring blows from another, without striking again ? He answered, Yea ; forasmuch as it is written, *Whosoever smites thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.* Upon which the other, not fearing (it seems) the danger of the experiment, struck him a warm blow upon the right cheek ; the Quaker received it with a great deal of patience, and turned to him the other cheek, when

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the other person, doubling his strength, almost felled the sturdy Quaker; who being provoked by the smart and pain, thought he had sufficiently obeyed the Text, rushes upon the other, with this expression, Thou shalt know that I have something of the old man yet; and, truly, banged him very handsomely.

Ald. *A subtil Quaker; but, it seems, he was not come to perfection, or else that Sect will fight too.*

Vic. No reasonable man will make a question of it; but the reason why I took notice of the deportment of our principal Dissenters towards these people was, to evince the great probability of Rebellion, if the principal Conventiclers are not restrained; which is all the Argument that a future contingent is capable of.

Ald. *Well then, methought I liked that discourse exceedingly upon your last absurdity from Fanatical Pretensions to the Testimony of the Spirit. Have you nothing more, that may, without violence to that little time we have left, be added against that confidence of theirs?*

Vic. Yes, Sir; if you please, I will conclude with this; that through this delusion the temptations and directions of the Devil
himself

himself may be entertained for the whisperings and motions of God's holy Spirit. For I would gladly know, where impulses are made Rules and Guides, how the owners of such uncertainties will be able to discern the difference betwixt the motions and suggestions? And it would not be unpleasant sport, to hear such critical persons exhibit their inward marks and *criteria*; He would certainly prove a most exact Enthusiast, fit to endoctrinate Mankind, that were able to discern different impulses made upon the same soul, to cause it to understand or believe; since, according to the apprehension of one that pretends no more skill in these matters than I do, there can be but one sort of action (at least not divers enough for the Patient to distinguish) in the Spirits of a man, the same convulsions and percussions on the Nerves, by which the soul is enabled to understand or believe; and as to this, both the action and mode of apprehension is the same, whether it be truth, or falshood under the notion of truth, that is presented to the Soul; a truth of God, or a Diabolical suggestion: If an Object seems true, it is embraced with the same passion and affection, as if it were a real truth: And it is impossible to make distinction there where there is no difference:

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What internal signs they have who are best skill'd in such melancholy Arts, I cannot well conjecture; but sure I am, that by such uncouth and unreasonable pretensions, they may as well receive the similitude of an Angel of light, as the Angel it self.

Ald. But, surely, they would not so far desert their reason and interest together, as to be led blindfold by such uncertainties, if such dangers and precipices lay in their way; they must have some tokens, or other, that must guide them out of this strange Labyrinth.

*Vic. I know they are good both at signs and wonders, and yet I cannot well discern what clue they can have to guide them: For you see all the various Sects (as numerous as the Grasshoppers of Egypt, and as great a torment as all their Plagues) all pretend, with an equal confidence, to the same testimony, and they never yet could (as I have heard) attempt, with success, the conviction of each other, from any inward marks and tokens, that one was deluded with a pretence only of what the other truly had: Nay, Sir, inform your self well, from the wisest of these persons, what they mean when they say that they have the Testimony of the Spirit; and you shall (unless you have the better fortune) have no other return than this, that they are
assured*

assured themselves of what they are not able to evidence unto others.

Ald. *That is sufficient reason for their own belief and action.*

Vic. Were there indeed no Paralogism upon their own Consciences, and cheat put, by their misapprehensions, upon themselves, this were sufficient ground to themselves for Faith and Action ; because, what the Spirit commands we may safely obey ; but they cannot reasonably, from this Topick, perswade another to the same belief, because they are not able to exhibite this Testimony to others, or to give signs and external tokens that may be potent to a conviction.

Ald. *Methinks now, Mr. Vicar, you yield the thing you have been for some time arguing against.*

Vic. I believe, Sir, you will percieve the contrary, when you remember that this last supposition was attended with condition, that this Testimony was no cheat. But I intend to make another use of this to your self.

Ald. *Pray let me hear it.*

Vic. Suppose then, for a little moment, that they had this Testimony of the Spirit assured to themselves, but they could not give an external

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external sign, and demonstration unto others, of what themselves were possessed of: This could not excuse you, as a Magistrate, from executing the Laws upon them.

Ald. *That is strange !*

Vic. Sir, it is not more strange than true: For you not knowing their pretended testimony, none having sufficient means of conviction of it; and the Doctrines and Actions of the Pretenders being, according to your present judgment, repugnant not only to the Law of the Land, which you are sworn to execute, but to that Law of God which is to remain Obligatory unto you, 'till you have sufficient means of knowledge, that another Law is established by the same Authority, to repeal what has a present Sanction; you are still engaged to look upon them as Impostors, and punish them accordingly.

Ald. *Then the Jews did not amiss in Crucifying our Saviour, nor the Primitive Persecutors in depriving the Apostles and Martyrs of their lives.*

Vic. I did indeed expect this Objection, and foresee the storm; and therefore am provided of shelter under it: The great Saviour of Mankind, had not only assured evidence
of

of his own Mission, he coming from God, to reconcile fallen Man to his Maker, and to abolish, what prefigured him, by the delivery and establishment of the Gospel of Peace : But the Father and Holy Ghost gave visible Tokens, and audible Voices, to attest this great truth to the Inquisitive, and then unbelieving World, sealing the truth of our Saviours great, though to Mankind new, Commission, together with the Doctrines he then delivered, to be the Director not only to the present Generation, but future Ages, by Signs and Wonders that arrived at the very height of true Miracles ; which being the Broad Seal of Heaven, were sufficient to establish the truth of what they were annexed to ; and might reasonably create a belief in those who either saw, or were certainly informed of the truth of them : And therefore the butchery and murder, nay, the hard usage of this glorious, as well as most gracious, Messenger, cannot, by all the Art and Reason of Mankind, admit of any Plea, or Excuse. And then for his Apostles, and those Primitive Martyrs that sacrificed their lives to give testimony to their Master's Divinity and Doctrine, and sealed the truth of their Profession and Religion with their own blood ; since the Apostles received our
Saviour's

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Saviours Commission, so well established by his own Actions of power and astonishment, which was further confirmed by God's Almighty Arm accompanying their Prayers and Benedictions, in Signs, almost, as great as those of their Lord and Master (necessary at the first plantation of the new Oeconomy, that came to rend the Veil of the Temple, and abolish those representative Ceremonies that had so solemn, and so long a Sanction :) And the Martyrs dying in the same Cause, our present Pretenders, that boldly affirm only what is a cheat to themselves, and cannot any way be evidenced to others, cannot at all be parallell'd with those ancient Martyrs, and Primitive Apostles; who, though by reason of interest, and the hardness of mens hearts, they could not convince either the Rulers of the Jews, or the powers of the Gentiles, yet gave such reason and confirmation of their Testimony of the Spirit, and inspiration from Heaven, that their Commission was legible to the whole World, though mens eyes (by reason of their stubbornness, or inadvertency) were so blind, that they would not see it.

Ald. But the jews still thought these as great Impostors as we can possibly pretend ours to be, and under that notion only punished them,

them, as you would now perswade us to deal with ours.

Vic. Could ours indeed prove their testimony for what they speak and do, to the disturbance both of Church and State, opposite unto Law, as well as the Apostles did their Inspiration; and confirm their Doctrines by Miracle, we had sufficient reason to believe them, and should certainly sin, in offering violence to the Spirit of God, should they be punished for their Belief or Actions: But because not only their pretensions are vain and frivolous, and they cannot give a rational evidence to Mankind of their inspiration, and their Doctrines, which they would endeavour to establish under this pretence, do not only tend to the undermining Government, and unsettling Foundations, but, in most of their differences from us, both in Faith, and Discipline, nay, to the very Phrase and all, has, by the ingenious Author of the forementioned Dialogues (the Books I sent you the other day) been proved, not only to be canting and childish, but impious and different from that Doctrine of the Gospel which is to endure 'till the general Flames and universal Period, and consequently supercedes all expectations of a future Law, or new discoveries of what is not contained within

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within the compass of its bounds and limits, they cannot admit of that Plea.

M: Ald. But what if now they shou'd at last produce Miracles for the confirmation of what you so earnestly contend against, what an horrid guilt should we bring upon our selves, by the punishment of such sacred Apostles?

Vic. Truly, if they should pretend any such thing (as I know not what their boldness is not confident enough either to expect or affirm) we must endeavour an acquaintance with *Hocus Pocus's*, for fear one of their tricks should cheat us; and make also Philosophical enquiries into the strength and power of natural causes; and take time to consider the matter well, with all its attending Circumstances, both of the person, and means of accomplishment, whether the Power were lasting and permanent, always ready to seal his pretence, and the like. But, to prevent all trouble by this objection, I will give you one invincible Argument, why you need never fear the confirmation of these mens Doctrines by Miracles, and, consequently, if you are satisfied of their present error, and deviation from the sacred truths of the Gospel, you may give them the trouble of the Law.

Ald. Pray,

Ald. Pray, Sir, what's that? For I do not love to have any scruples remaining, that shall gall my Conscience, for punishing these men, according to my Oath.

Vic. In that your Worship does exceeding well: For if you act doubtingly, it will not only be injurious to your self, but your fear will make you too remiss; and you will want that courage and resolution, that at all times becomes a Magistrate, but more especially, when he is to deal with such a Crue as these. The reason, then, which may satisfie you is this; That the Gospel having its perpetual Sanction, if Miracles should confirm any Doctrine or Action opposite to this, the whole Trinity would be impeached of falshood and lies, which the most holy God for ever abhors: And therefore *Sr. Paul's Anathema* may very well silence this doubt: *Though we, or an Angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than what we have preached, let him be accursed*: Which he repeats again in the very next Verse, to testifie the perpetuicy of the Gospel, as well as the vanity and impudence of those that would have perverted the Gospel of Christ; and not only so, but to prevent all future expectations, and eternally stop the mouths of those that should perchance be given to change.

Ald. This

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Ald. This indeed reaches my present case : and I hope, for the future, I shall not be frightened from the discharge of mine Obligation by any such frivolous and vain pretences.

Vic. In that, Sir, you will not only shew your self both a Friend to Church and State, but you will keep a good Conscience, void of just scruple to it self, and offence to others: Especially, when you shall well consider, that this boldness of our Adversaries, so inevitably cheats their own souls, as well as becomes an occasion of delusion to their acquaintance and brethren: For their pretence to this divine testimony, can be nothing else but an heightning of their persuasions, and making their belief bold and strong, and, consequently, their Resolutions and Actions to maintain it confident, and zealous. And since we find but little difference in these effects, viewed and considered in persons of a divers faith and apprehensions, whose Principles are as opposite to each other, as repugnant to our common belief, as reason and observation certainly informing those that are more inquisitive and ingenious, that Perswasion, Resolution, Confidence, and Zeal receive their various Elevations, and gradual Assurgencies, as well by those Evidences and Arguments which we conjecture to be certainty

tainty of Demonstration, as by any impulse or motion they can be imagined to have. How can they discover the truth of that testimony which they pretend to, and discern what the holy Spirit seals, from what is but phausie and opinion, or perhaps a malicious suggestion from him who is the greatest Adversary to Mankind, and perpetually envies those hopes of blis that yet remain to *Adam's Offspring*?

Ald. I must needs acknowledge the strength and prevalence of your Arguments and reason; and I heartily thank you (from that joy and content I hope to have in the discharge of my too much neglected duty) for your great pains that you have now taken, to measure both mine own, and our Adversaries errors, by the Standard of truth and reason: But, yet, though I am convinced that the Fanaticks have no just Plea of their own; yet, methinks, there may be some circumstances, attending the present season and straits that we seem to be brought into, that may remit the rigour of my Oaths Obligation, to execute the Laws against these persons. Will not compulsion, think you, make them hypocrites?

Vic. I do not conjecture that Swords and Violence were ever intended as a rational mean to enforce Christianity, or to bring

Q men

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men to a belief of what they cannot by motive and argument be perswaded to yield the truth of; nor yet can I conjecture that the smartest Scourges can make these persons greater hypocrites, than what for the most part they already are; and therefore (as I hinted before) our present Laws do not compell mens belief, but only take Cognizance of their Actions; Your Authority is supplicated, and humbly begg'd, to be made use of, only to restrain their open affronts to Law and Government, and to give a check to their bold Assemblies, and numerous Meetings, for fear lest their discerning their strength, they may at last attempt by force, what your Oath obliges you to endeavour to prevent and obviate: And by this they will only pay a Tribute, at the most, by Mulcts and Punishments for what they are so willing to enjoy; and they need not be forced to a Faith in that which Reason does not perswade them to believe. Thus the Rod punishing and restraining the unlimited propagation of Error and Schism, they will, by this, be put upon enquiry after the Truth, and upon a sufficient view of what they have not yet made a through inspection into; they may at last embrace, with cordial affection, what they now prosecute, and offer violence to
with

with the greatest transports of passion and malignity.

Ald. But their Party seems so very much lately increased, that they will turn the edge of the Magistrates Sword, and weary Justice with the execution of them.

Vic. You may therefore cut your work far shorter; and Justice may act with the less noise, but greater success, if you only prosecute the Heads of them, and execute the Laws only upon those who lead the innocent sheep astray.

Ald. And are you contented that the rest should still run into disorder?

Vic. You will find the rest, in time, to run themselves into the fold, when the Bell-weather is gone, which they were wont to follow.

Ald. But methinks this shou'd be the Office of the Bishops, and their Ecclesiastical Judges.

Vic. First, Sir, all that the Law permits them to act, punishes nothing but the soul, and conscience; and those persons that we have to deal with, have their Consciences seared with an hot iron, so that these wounds will not make them bleed; for the utmost a Bishops Court can do, is but to excommunicate the Offender.

Q 2 *Ald. And*

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Ald. *And is not that exceeding severe ?*

Vic. It is, Sir, a most dreadful Sentence, and made such gashes and wounds formerly, that no Medicine, but an Absolution could heal ; far more deep than the severest stroke from the sharpest Sword, set on by the hand of the most potent Emperour : But now since Atheism and Impiety has grown to a height, under the pretense and shelter of Reformation and Religion, heavens thunder, and lightening too, proves to men but like Squibs and Rockets, make only a great noise, and a pleasant flash, but scarce singe so much as the Garment.

Ald. *Methinks, Mr. Vicar, you make light of that, which was wont to be esteemed a serious matter, and awed the minds and consciences of men, before Christianity could gain either the favour or assistance of the Civil Magistrate.*

Vic. I only now gave you the Conjectures of those persons we have to deal with, when Order and Religion are almost banished, by the boldness and Rebellion of wicked men : but if you would have mine own judgment, I cannot but tremble at the very thoughts of an Excommunication ; which, being attended with its due circumstances, does not only cut off Communion here, but also from
Fellow-

Fellowship with the blessed Angels and Saints hereafter ; and what is thus bound on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven.

Ald. And why cannot this then have the same effects that it had heretofore, to restrain men from vice and disobedience ?

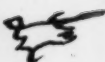
Vic. Your Worship need not enquire a reason of this, when you shall consider, that those for the most part, that will be concerned in this Sentence, have other Notions, not only of the Sentence it self, but also of the Persons that pronounce it, than the Primitive Christians formerly had ; they think the Sentence is not of such force as we believe it is, and, however, that those persons that now pronounce it, are not sufficiently authorized to do it.

Ald. Why ? They are Commissioned by the King himself, and enabled by the Laws of the Land.

Vic. The wisest of them will not question, I suppose, but that they have a Civil Sanction, and that the Ecclesiastical are the Kings Courts ; but this is so far from being Argumentative to produce fear, that it is the only reason why they scorn it, and the chief motive that I would make use of to crave assistance from the Civil Sword.

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Ald. *How can that possibly be? Methinks you relate Riddles to me.*



Vic. I shall presently then unriddle the Mystery, because I am not willing to hold you in suspense; You must know then, that our Non-conformists are much of the Papists humour in particular; nor can they think, that the Civil Power should give a Sanction to the Kirks Laws; and therefore, if they can but satisfy themselves, that the present Church is without Power derived from Heaven, the Statutes made to confirm our Courts, or to make the Sentences of these valid, they conclude to be of no greater concernment, than the other Laws made against themselves, and may be equally violated without sin, or danger. To tell you the truth, Sir, they look upon our Church as none at all; our Bishops only as Popish Prelates; our Ministers as nothing but *Baal's* Priests; and all our maintenance, as nothing but food for the God *Bell*.

Al. *Not so surely.*

Vic. Why do they then separate from us? And not only look upon our Prayers as deficient, but our very Sermons without Authority and Power; nay, our very Communion and Sacraments as abomination and pollution?

Ald. *These*

Ald. *These men indeed must be looked to; for, I see, if they are permitted thus to run on without controul, they will not only bring us to confusion, but kill and slay, that they may take possession.*

Vic. That was, you know, their former Doctrine; and though they then made (as one would think) sufficient use; yet, according to their usual Method, they are yet upon the Application.

Ald. *But if these men reject our Church, and deny our Bishops to be at least Ministers, how will they make out their own Call, and evidence their own Ordination lawful, since their Primitive Reformers (the Authors of their Succession) received Orders from the Bishops hands, by virtue of which they presumed to impose upon others?*

Vic. They have a way to deny Succession to be necessary to a Church; and besides, they have changed their Principles (as your Dialogue will inform you) that the Presbyterian might the better associate with the Independent, and unite their Forces to vanquish ours: But if you would have your doubt at large resolved, I know you are sufficiently acquainted, and have familiarity with persons of all Perswasions; and I desire you would put your Objection close to them, that so

Q 4 they

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they may give you a resolution of what I profess my self unable to do; nor will I attempt it, since neither my Judgment, nor Obligation leads me to it.

Ald. I see no reason, indeed, why you should be put upon the defense of them: But an Excommunication makes men liable to Temporal Punishments, and methinks they should be afraid of them.

Exc. *Vic.* 'Tis true indeed (now your Worship has given me a hint of it) I remember I have been informed, that an Excommunicated person cannot make a will, nor recover any debt (he not being qualified for a Plaintiff, but Defendant only) and besides this, he lies open not only to the just zeal of true Christians, but to the malice and spleen of any one that owes him a grudge.

Ald. How so, Mr. Vicar? It seems the Ecclesiastical Authority is armed with greater power than I thought of: We must have a care of you our selves, for we are liable to this Sentence.

Vic. And are not we liable to your Justice? Our gracious Rulers have a little armed us with a Law, who otherwise (by reason of our usual poverty) should be open to all misfortunes and dangers: But let us both do well, be loyal and obedient, and we shall not only

only avoid the Penalties of the Law, but have praise and encouragement from the law-giver. But as to that attendant of an Excommunication that may justly scare even those that seem to fear it least; it is (as I was saying) that they are subject to every man's imprisonment; for after they have stood Excommunicate forty daies, any one, that will address himself, may take out a Writ, *De Excommunicato capiendo*, and lay them in Prison.

Ald. *And would you have greater power than this? 'Tis a wonder all Goals are not full of these exorbitant persons.*

Vic. 'Tis not to me strange at all, because there must be Money in the case; the Writ is so chargeable, that a few of them would swallow up my poor Vicaridge; and no private person, out of charity to the Church, will contribute any thing to the punishment of those troublers of *Israel*. But what advantage would your Worship get by it, if this method were used?

Ald. *Then we should escape their envie and malice, that are Justices of the Peace, because we should not be the instruments of their punishment.*

Vic. In that, Sir, you must pardon me, if I endeavour to inform you of your mistake
in

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in this point of Law : and I hope you will not take an advertisement amiss, though it is in what your Worship should be acquainted with.

Ald. Prethee say what thou wilt ; he is a mad man that will be angry at thy language : thou hast an Heart for a Prince, although thou hast a Purse but for a Begger.

Vic. I thank your good Worship, and the rest of your Brethren, for that liberal maintenance I do enjoy : Contentment (you know) will equal the Vicar to the Alderman. But, Sir, whereas you were saying, that if the Fanaticks were proceeded against by the Writ *De Excommunicato capiendo*, you should be free from contributing to their punishment ; you must needs forget your self: For the very Sentence of Excommunication does deliver the Offendor to the Secular Power, and all the punishments and inconveniences which succeed that doom, as to the body, are meerly Temporal ; nay, the very Writ, that we are now discoursing of, must be directed to Justices of the Peace, and by their Power is the Offendor imprisoned ; so that if the Law be at all executed, it must be by your hands, or else it will not prove effectual, either to restrain those that are contumacious and refractory, nor terrifie those

those who are more ingenuous and pliable.

Ald. *Well then, if there be a necessity, we must break through the briars and thorns, we must encounter with the Lion in the way, since our Oaths oblige us; and I find by you there is no avoiding the Obligation; and, indeed, it admits not of any other way of effecting the design of restitution to our Adversaries, and peace unto our selves: Though (if I should make an ingenuous confession) I would not be troubled with offending my Neighbours, nor can I well endure their abuses and clamours.*

Vic. I am sorry to see so little of the Spirit of a courageous Magistrate, that should not fear the faces of men, much less such poor contemptible nothings as those are; and they must not be angry for this expression, because 'tis their own. What should your Worship be afraid of? A Religion that is nothing but Shadow, and Phrases, and Persons that never yet were contented with all the Largesses of most indulgent Princes; nay, and those too, who, when in power, were themselves the greatest Imposers, and most strict in their Punishments against all that did in the least deviate from their established practices; and notwithstanding all their canting confessions of their former guilt in this particular, now they themselves are liable to Penalties,

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Penalties, will (if ever they shall by ill chance or violence become our Masters) be more rigid and severe than ever; and we shall certainly find the smart of what you seem so unwilling, ever now and then, to execute upon them.

Ald. I cannot think they are for rigour and imposition, that so much decry it; but if it could appear that they used it in the late times, methinks we had reason to suspect it for the future.

*Vic. I am troubled, methinks, to find you so forgetful of our late miseries, which perhaps may make you the less sensible of our present dangers: Every one, that was loyal to his King, and true to his Religion, felt the stroke of their severity and malice. But, to put this out of all controversie, I will send you down a little Book newly come to my hands (which is called *Samaritanism revised*) that shall fully silence this Objection, and convince you, from the testimony of their own Authors, both forein and domestick, that are best approved by their own Party; that they are so far against Toleration of any but themselves, that they affirm severities and smart punishments the just debt to those which they account Hereticks and Schismaticks. I have not yet read over the*

the Book, but, by what I have perused, I see the Author is of a Publick Spirit, and wounds the Fanaticks with their own Weapons; and because the whole demonstrates the Piety, Equity, and necessity of putting the Laws in execution both against Popish and Puritan Recusants, I must commend the whole to your perusal; and it may, 'tislike, prevail more than our present Discourse.

Ald. Pray be as good as your word, and send it me then; but I would fain have the Bishops more active.

Vic. In their places, and according to the extent of their Laws and Permission, I question not but they are: For I am sure their interest, as well as every honest mans, is equally concerned. But 'tis the Temporal Sword must cut off these Excrescencies, for we see they condemn the Bishops Courts: And methinks the method is not so natural, for those who must use Rhetorick, and perswasion, to encline those to a cordial embracement of what severity may drive them to the profession of, to be the prime Authors, and the immediate Instruments of conveying to them their Mulets and Penalties. If the Temporal Authority would but gall them, we could then have an opportunity to prove Chirurgeons

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geons to them, and apply our Plasters to their sores; and should have that advantage of perswasion that we have when we visit sick men, who are then for the most part in a serious posture, and are willing to embrace those instructions and exhortations that, in time of health, they scorned and refused. But now, if the Clergy should be made the only Authors of their punishments, they would hate the hand that had given them the wound so much, that they would not endure them to apply any Medicine to effect a cure; and it would, at best, be looked upon as no other than breaking the head, and giving them a Plaster.

Ald. I cannot but acknowledge you speak a great deal of reason in this: and I think it will prevail with me, as much as any thing you have said yet, to be active in mine Office against these men.

Vic. As much as any thing, Sir, but your Oath you should say; for that Obligation still remains sacred and solemn: and you renounce your interest in that Gospel you then kissed, when you entred into those potent bonds, not to be broken without the penalty of severe repentance, or damnation and torment in the other World, if you do not discharge your promise.

Ald. You

Ald. You see, Mr. Vicar. I am almost persuaded, but you do perpetually rub old sores, and gall me with the Obligation of my Oath, you have not yet heard all that I have to plead in bar of so strict an Obligation. Ob, O:

Vic. I hope you are already convinced that you ought to endeavour, what lies in your power, to fulfil your promises made to God, especially those that are sealed and confirmed by the bond and solemnity of a sacred Oath: And that everlasting chains become due to you, if you voluntarily break those Cords that you have at present bound your self to God Almighty with.

Ald. I am not so forgetful of your discourse, nor so insensible of mine own Obligation: But impossibility of performance does as well disoblige me from the engagement of mine Oath, as illegality has voided the bond of the Covenant. It is impossible to do any good upon these people by the execution of Laws, and therefore in vain to attempt it.

Vic. I am sure, Sir, you have already taken Gods name in vain, if you do not attempt it, and as far as is within the compass of your power to execute it too: But I cannot but wonder that you should suppose your Oath impossible to be discharged; I fear you have not yet much attempted it, or else the Essay has

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has been attended with imprudence, or impatience; you have either failed in the manner of your administration, or some trouble or inconvenience to your self hath directed your intention, and put a stop to your Justice.

Ald. We did, Sir, (*when the King was first restored to the possession of these Kingdoms, which he had before an undoubted right to*) vigorously execute the Laws against these discontented persons; and we found that our Prisons were always full to very little, or no, purpose, and there they would preach out at the very Grates, and disturb the ears of all travellers, and gather Conventicles at the Prison doors.

Vic. Truly, Sir, 'twas an easie matter to give the losers leave to talk; and by my consent they should have exercised thus 'till they had been weary both of prating and restraint: Why did you then discharge them, and not constantly persevere in making them endure the Penalty of the Laws? To shew Children the Rod only, and never giving them the sense of its lash, does but the more harden them in their stubbornness: Those persons, when they had felt your Justice, and seen your Resolution, would, in time, have been weary of their own sufferings; and
others

others would have been sufficiently deterr'd, by their examples, from future molestations of Law and Justice, or provocation of that Sword which they perceived to be so sharp and keen. You could not, I believe, but observe a difference betwixt their carriage then, and their deportment now : Those that now, with confidence enough, desert our Assemblies, were devout, then, at the reading the Liturgy : But when they see they may, with impunity, provoke Authority, and contemn Government ; they separate then out of humour of being singular, or by reason of the least disobligation from the Minister, or perhaps any other in Communion with them ; nay, if Authority does but punish any one for Vice or Debauchery, away they will immediately run to a Conventicle, and desert their Religion to be, as they suppose, revenged of their Adversary : Nay, after a little while, we shall scarce have a Whore carted, or an impudent Scold put into the ducking stool, nay, a Drunkard or Blasphemer set by the heels, but, to contemn that Authority that sentenced them to their most just punishment, they will present themselves at the next meeting place, that from malice and revenge they may break the Law in another place, where, by reason of the neglect, or

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cowardize of those that should maintain its force, and resist the breach, it becomes weak, and easily assaulted, and overcome; since they were beat back by due chastisement from the former onset and battery. Had you but continued, as well as you begun at his Sacred Majesties first arrival, you should not have had the tythe of what trouble you must now expect; nor they the tenth of what numbers they have since secured, nor any of us those present fears that hourly encrease and daily invade us.

2. Ald. *But will the Fanaticks receive such persons, that out of such wicked humour, and from principles of revenge, fly from us, only because justice has reached them?*

Vic. If they are women, they will not at all be scrupulous, especially if they are indifferently handsome; for because *Mary Magdalen* proved a Saint, therefore they would have all Saints to be *Mary Magdalens*: The more Devils have been cast out, the greater is the glory of the Exorcist. But if they are men, they will sometimes a little thrive them for fear, at last, their rational soul should domineer over their sense, and they should return by the way from whence they came, and discover all their deeds of darkness, and relate the Saints failings to the wicked.

wicked. But not to divert our present Discourse, which must now draw towards a conclusion with the day; suppose what opposition you will in the execution of the Laws upon these Gamesters in Religion, that play all hazards upon their Bibles, yet your Oath, as a Justice, still obliges you; and if ever you will ascend God's holy hill, though you swear to your own hurt, you must not change.

Ald. *True, Sir, if an impossibility did not attend my Oath, and consequently discharge me.*

Vic. Was your Oath impossible to be kept when you first took it?

Ald. *No, no; then it had been utterly unlawful, and then I must have repented for what was impious and unjust, not to be made the matter of an Oath.*

Vic. Is it then become impossible since?

Ald. *Yes, that it is; because of the encrease of their numbers, and the boldness and courage they have acquired.*

Vic. Your Worship and your Brethren are to have thanks given to you for that, for giving them encouragement by your lenity and forbearance; when the Laws were sufficiently valid, and you under the greatest obligation to enforce and execute them. It is a sad

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thing that men will make so many excuses now, who, to my knowledge, in the late times were sufficiently active to execute the Impositions of tyrannical Usurpers; notwithstanding the numbers of those that wished the King well bore a greater proportion to those Army Myrmidons, than the Fanaticks do to us now. But what are these formidable numbers? 'Tis true, they make them appear as dreadful as they can; for every one of them has his mouth full of fire and brimstone, that they blow forth continually upon us, and, both in their Writings and Conventicles, make as great a shew as possibly they are able: But you may see by this that their numbers are not so formidable as they would endeavour to make us believe; for their Teachers were not so very many that refused Conformity, and yet you have to every little sneaking Conventicle, no less than five or six waiting Chaplains that are maintained, for the most part, from what the good women steal from their Husbands; besides, several of them had Temporal Estates, and are wary enough to keep close to their own Families, for fear the Law may reach them, when the others poverty makes them venturous. We were best, after a while, run away from a nest of Snakes, because they
put

put out their tongues; or be afraid of a flock of Geese, because they hold out their necks and hiss at us. Would you, that are in Authority, but a little discountenance these insinuating Companions, and discharge your Oath upon the Leaders of the Factions, you would find the Multitude melt and dissolve like Snow against the Sun, and we need no longer be afraid of Tumults and Insurrections: But, admitting their numbers to be great and insolent, I cannot imagine how the execution of the Laws becomes impossible. Are they become so spiritual, that they are invisible too? Or do not their bold Pragmaticks often enough walk the Streets? Or is not a Serjeant in Divinity sufficiently known, when he has alwaies the Formality of his Coise on? Is not the Law still the same that it was; have you not the same Authority and way to execute it, the same Officers and Power to attend you? Had you ever yet a prohibition from your Superiours, that might discharge the Obligation of your Oath? Did not the House of Commons, with their Speaker before them, petition his Majesty to set forth his Royal Proclamation, to command you to execute the Laws in force against these Meetings and unlawful Assemblies? And does not your Oath, that is so

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sacred and solemn, that, when wilfully neglected and openly violated, must inevitably bring eternal vengeance upon the contemnners head, yet remain obligatory in the highest? Though no man can be obliged to an impossibility, yet a Promissory Oath must bind him to the utmost of his power and ability: And can you say that you have acted to the utmost of your strength, or according to those seasons and opportunities that are daily put into your hands? If not, never conjecture your Plea of Impossibility will be sufficient to excuse your negligence and indifferency.

Ald. Well, Mr. Vicar, you have argued this last point home, not only to my Capacity, but Conscience; and though I must confess my self sufficiently galled, yet I shall not wince at my conviction: You have a strange faculty in persuasion; I never thought to have been brought to this trouble——

Vic. Trouble, Sir! It should be your delight to be strict and diligent in the performance of your duty; and your greatest trouble must be, that you have been no less troubled for the breach of your Oath: You cannot say what I perswade you to is impossible to be done, without a stain and blot upon your Oath, and consequently your honour as a Justice of the Peace; for you know

know you are always new sworn in this Corporation, as well as chosen, once a year; and surely the putting the Laws in execution is no more impossible at this time, than it was last *Michaelmas*; either then your Oath was unlawful it binding you to what was impossible when you took it, or else it is still most severely obligatory, notwithstanding all your pretended impossibility. Let courage therefore and a pious resolution shine like Jewels in the midst of your titles, and let not the breach and violation of an Oath, make your Bed, sometime or other, prove your Grave, and your Grave a worser torment: But duly execute his Majesties most pious and just Laws, that are as well the Pales of the Church, as the Bulwarks of the Kingdom.

Ald. But, you know, we are Justices of the Peace, and the design of mine Office is only for the peace and welfare of this place, and consequently, as a part of the whole Kingdom. Now when my judgment tells me that the execution of the Laws will more tend to the ruine and destruction of our peace and quietness by the provocation and disturbance of these persons, than the forbearance; certainly I am excused from the Obligation of mine Oath in that respect.

Vic. I am not, Sir, of your opinion in relation to what you now propose; nor do I

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conjecture that the executing the Laws against Conventicles and unlawful Assemblies will at all disturbe, but very much settle, the peace and tranquillity of the Kingdom: For their numbers are not yet so great, but that they may with facility be suppressed, without any breach upon our present quiet; would the Justices of Peace lend their assistance, and Command their Constables and inferiour Officers to seize and apprehend the principal Actors, that they may be brought to the Bar of Justice, to receive their Sentence and condign punishment. For substraet but the number of women and children, that are incapable of resistance, from the total sum of these bold Usurpers, and Violaters of the Law; and abate for the want of ability of some, by reason of their Age, and the defect of courage and resolution in others; and we need not fear the power of the rest, there will remain so inconsiderable a number to be encountred with: Finally, add to all this, that they are, for the most part, persons who are inconsiderable in their interest, being Tradesmen and Handicrafts; so that, if their Drum should beat, and their Trumpets sound sedition and tumult, it could be none other than a Prologue to their final destruction. But if
none

none of these Pleas could possibly with any reason be made, you are not, in your Office, to be a Judge of what is a mean to promote or continue the Publi^ck Peace ; for your Sentence is not proper in this cause, unless you were a Privie Counsellor ; but the Laws, you are sworn to, are to be your Director, and, unless you receive a prohibition from him who has the Supreme Executive as well as Legislative Power of the Kingdom, your Oath (whatever may either through fear, self-interest, or indulgence to others be pleaded to the contrary) will oblige you, upon no less danger than the ruine of your soul, to do what in you lies to discharge it.

Ald. But our livelihood is in this totally concerned: We that are Tradesmen, should we be severe in the execution of the Laws against these persons, we must of necessity be undone, for we should lose a great part of our Customs.

Vic. Methinks your Worship is just like a person quite shipwrecked, you catch, with such greediness, at every little Planke and Oar ; and I hope I have almost vanquished all your Arguments and Doubts, and hewed down the main Pillars of the House, you do so prop up your building with Poles and Faggot-sticks: Do you not yet consider that the welfare of your soul is to be preferred before

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before not only your Estate, but your Life too? *What advantage is it* (that I may put to you our Saviour's Question) *to gain the whole World, and to lose your own soul?* This is so precious a Jewel, that it is not capable of barter, or exchange: All your torment for the gaining of an Estate here, is only to make your Posterity rich: and what benefit can you reap from their temporal welfare and prosperity? Your body will lie rotting in a grave, and that Vault will be too obscure and dark for you to see through, and take a prospect of your Families splendour. There cannot possibly be the least reflection, from their honour and advancement here, upon you, when lodged in your bed of earth, and crumbled into Dust and Vermine. And then to have your Soul eternally miserable, and to salute your body in fire and flames at the great and glorious Morning of the Resurrection, because you have neglected your Obligations here, both to God, your King, and his holy Church, only to secure your present Possessions, or to heap up Riches for future Generations; this is relinquishing the highest Heaven for a poor contemptible spot of Earth. Methinks, Sir, you should be better skilled in your own Trade, than to exchange the Pearl of preat price, for small, contemptible, and perishing

perishing Commodities; to barter Diamonds for *Bristol* stones, and with the Indians, to sell the finest Gold for a small piece of painted Glass. If the severest Duties, and strictest Obligations of most solemn Oaths, may thus be dispensed with, when Interest stands in competition with them; we then certainly never yet understood our Religion, nor is the Gospel of our Saviour the way to Heaven, nor will the Gates of that glorious City be ever opened to the Practicers of Christianity. For if we make a narrow search into those eternal Precepts of the great Author and Contriver of our Religion, as well as Redeemer and Purchaser of our lives and ransom, we shall find, next to a belief in our Saviour, that they consist in mortifying our Appetites, Passions, and Desires, in withdrawing our Affections from too eager a pursuit of this World, in a blessed contentation with our present Lot, that turns Earth into Heaven and Paradise, in a due and constant obedience to our Superiours, a strict observation of our Promises and Vows, and there must not be with us yea and nay. 'Tis a wonder to me, that *St. Peter* should be blamed for denying his Master, if any interest might dispense with duty; or that the Primitive Martyrs had not been more wary, than to
burn

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burn their bodies, when they were no acceptable Sacrifice. Our Saviour, I am sure, was obedient to the death, and has assured those of their unworthiness of himself, or any of those advantages that he has brought to an ungrateful World, if they love their Relations better than himself. Believe it, Sir, God and Mammon, Christ and Belial cannot both be served and obeyed; and if you will obey the Commands of one, you must not become a slave to the other. I cannot but admire, that a person of your Port and Gravity would once mention such an Objection as this, that sets a Temporal Interest against a Spiritual advantage, as if it were ponderous enough to encline the balance both of Faith and Reason. Shall a great and solemn duty be neglected, to which you are obliged by the bond of an Oath, in which either your laziness or contempt execrates all your own felicity, and abandons your everlasting bliss, only for the Pelf and glittering Dust of a ruinous and tottering World? This is making a God of Mammon, prostration before the Golden Image, and adoring a pitiful lump of clay. But what should I argue thus with a Christian? You are baptized; and therefore have renounced the World, as well as the Flesh and the Devil :
and

and therefore I hope this Objection started from you through weakness and inadvertency only, and was not the effect of Judgment or Premeditation; nor can you conjecture that Private Interest is of that concern with Almighty God as to be potent enough to release you from the least duty, much less from the great and most strict Obligation of an Oath. And yet, that I may endeavour to obviate all Evasions, even to those that may not have so deep and prevalent a sense of duty, You know by reason of my Residence and Function in this Town I am acquainted with almost all sorts of Tradesmen.

Ald. *I know you are.*

Vic. They tell me then, that indulgence of the Justices to Fanaticks does not at all encrease their Custome, or support their Trade; nor will any Obligation engage those men to buy any where but there where they may have the best bargain: And that which inclines me to a belief of this, is that prodigious covetousness and Jewish griping that I have observed in the most of them, as if it were riveted in their very Religion, for they pretend abstinence to save the expenses of hospitality and good neighbourhood, and so become, in their way, religious only that they may save charges: Nor can I at all wonder

at

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at these mens avarice, as long as they have so much of pride and humour to maintain: So that as your interest and livelihood, were it concerned, is not enough to weigh down your duty and Oath, even that cannot be much damnified by your Justice and Severity to those persons: For somewhere or other they must buy, and if your goods be most merchantable, and best cheap, you will not fail of these Customers: If not, all the art and skill that you have, all the favour and kindness you can shew them, shall never be arguments prevalent enough to draw them into your noose and snare: For there are no persons, under the Canopy of Heaven, that are better skill'd in the arts and tricks of cheat and couzenage than themselves; and therefore will easily discern the little wiles that you lay for them.

*Ald. I cannot but return very many thanks to you, Mr. Vicar, for all your large and pertinent discourses, which I must confess have fully convinced me not only of the danger of discontented persons, if permitted any longer to meet thus in great numbers to the disturbance of our peace both in Church and State, but also of the Obligation of mine Oath, as a Justice of the Peace, to put in execution the Laws against them: And I pray God enable me to deny mine
interest*

interest rather than so great and solemn an Obligation, as an Oath is.

Vic. Trust God Almighty, Sir, with your Estate; he will never bless you the less for the performance of your duty: For if *you be willing and obedient you shall eat the good of the Land, but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the Sword, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, Isa. 1. 19, 20.* Trust, Sir, in God and do good, and you need not doubt of being sufficiently fed. Not only the welfare of the Church, which is as glorious as it is great, depends upon your activity, courage, and diligence; but even the King's honour, and the Kingdoms prosperity: For if Laws, that have received their Sanction, are not put in execution, it must be for one of these three Reasons; either because they are imprudent and unjust in themselves, and this will subvert the Legislators wisdom: Or, secondly, because he that is to put them in execution has not power enough to accomplish the design, and then, his force being contemptible, fear and dread will be withdrawn from the Subject: Or (lastly) because there is a defect in his will for the accomplishment of what his Power is ready to assist him in, and the Justice of the cause enforces the Obligation of the duty: and either of these Reasons
being

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being granted, and believed amongst the multitude will immediately lay a Kingdom waste, and reduce Empires into heaps of Ruines: For a Prince being thought to want wisdom, brings his Person in contempt; want of power in time raises his Adversaries, and defect of will to resist and withstand them, encourages them to proceed to victory and conquest.

Ald. I have nothing wish which I can withstand your conviction. God pardon my past neglects, and I will be more sedulous for the time to come: But methinks it should something abate our rigour, to consider that they would tolerate us.

Jol. *Vic. I see, did not your Oath goad you, the welfare of the Church and peace of the Kingdom would scarce prevail. Shake off, for once, all your fear, and do not love the honour more than the duty and burden of your Office: And then I will tell you that never any Party yet would plead for Toleration, but whilst themselves were under restraint; they had another note when the Sun shined, different from what they have in a shower. To my knowledge Toleration was accursed in their mouths, who now thank God for a gracious indulgence. The late times will afford you testimonies enough of their tyranny, when they wore the Sword of Power*

Power and Force, and we shall assuredly find their actions contrary to their specious pretensions, should Rebellion ever be rampant to a victory. Do but read over the Books I lent you, and tell methen what hopes you have of an indulgence from them, unless you once more turn to their Principles and Opinions. But that I may use a Reason that must of necessity silence this Plea, shall we suffer our selves to become the conquered Party, only that we may experience the civility of our Adversary? Will any man, in his right senses, make over his Lordship and Possessions to another, that he may receive a Pension from it? We can expect none other than the greatest violence from persons of their Principles and malice, and therefore let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.

Ald. But if they should chance to have their designs accomplished, and should, either by strength or treachery gain a victory over us, and so we should lose the day, they wou'd presently fall to pieces again, and thrust their Swords in one anothers bowels.

Vic. This, Sir, will be readily consented to: But as by their former Methods you collect this, so by their present attempts you may, without the help of Stars, Prognosticate their barbarous designs of ruine to our
S Church.

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Church. And it cannot but be a strange piece of Policy for a Prince to permit the invasion of his Territories, and sacrifice both himself and Possessions to the Avarice and Malice of his cruel Adversaries, that they, wanting an Enemy to encounter, may sheath their Swords in one anothers bowels: To be sure they will not disagree as long as they have a Common Adversary left alive, and it will be strange pleasure for a dead Enemy that his Adversaries rage against each other. I hope, Sir, your Arguments are all now spent: for the Vessel I perceive is out, by the dregs and Lees that run from it. Let me now with all humility, beseech your double care for the execution of what has been, to our sorrow, too long neglected; and let a true repentance, for your Omissions, be evidenced both to God Almighty, and the World, by your future vigour and Activity. The Night has now blotted out the Day, and calls for a period to our Discourse: The Laws will prove your best Director, and your Oath and Duty the greatest Motive, Let the gaping wounds of a bleeding Church beg your Charity to bind up the sores, and the devastation and misery of former Wars, and almost total subversion of Christianity amongst us, beseech your endeavour to support that Church, which a
warm

warm Sun would soon revive, and a sovereign Balsam quickly cure : That your duty to God may be faithfully discharged, and the breach of Oaths may not burden your Conscience ; That you may prove both an obedient and loyal Subject unto him who gives you your Honour and Authority by your Office, a faithful Assertor of his Majesties Power, and Supreme Prerogative, a stout Champion for the Church's Privileges, a just Fence to Propriety and Enclosures, and a charitable Repairer of those breaches that Schism and Sedition have too long made upon us. So shall you be a true Fence to the Fold of Christ, preserving the enclosed from the mouths of Wolves ; and be a means of reducing those wandring sheep that, through giddiness or wantonness, have strayed, out of their appointed Pastures, amongst the wild beasts of the Forest. And God Almighty direct all your undertakings, and crown your Pious and Christian endeavours with success ; that your courageous resolutions and sacred Promises may never terminate or be invalidated, through the subtilty of the Adversary, or allurements of the World, 'till your unwearied Performance publicly testifies, that your Promise was not rash, nor your Oath in vain.

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Ald. Now, Sir, that you have answered my scruples, and invalidated my reasonings, I should be beneath the worth of mankind, if I should not thankfully receive my conviction: And I hope, whatever liberty I thought my accustomed Authority might intitle me unto, in giving checks sometimes to the manner of your Phrase, and smartness of Expression, I shall for the future abate, and retract; as well knowing, that though the contracted maintenance of this place may seem to cloud your merits and deserts, yet respect is always due to a Scholar; much more shall I endeavour to support my self in such a kind and courteous familiarity as becomes one whose soul is committed to your care and charge; and shall so far testify that abundant joy and pleasure I have had in receiving such ample satisfaction from you, that I shall for the future not only my self increase my present allowance to you, but shall endeavour to perswade the rest of my Brethren to a more liberal Contribution: that so you may bear something of the Port of an Ambassador of heaven, that you may be able to pray without distraction, and preach with Authority, without restraint either from our humours or Vices.

Vic. I humbly thank your good Worship that you are pleased to accept any thing which

which I am able to attempt towards the Satisfaction of your scruple and doubtfulness; and that you have, not only with patience, but entreaty, heard my familiar, though for the most part dutiful, discourse thus long. Whatever words have been by me spoken rash and unadvised, I hope your clemency and mercy will pardon, and for any seeming levities and jocular Sarcasmes I question not but your candour and Ingenuity will forgive. Let us both now, in our several Callings, endeavour the suppression of that rude multitude that wishes evil to the prosperity of our *Sion*; I with a meek and gentle perswasion, and you by a due execution of the Laws; that so peace may be within our Walls, and plenteousness visible in all our Habitations, that all Vice, of all kinds, being discountenanced, and punished, both in Friends and Adversaries, mercy and truth may shine from heaven, whilst righteousness and peace kiss on earth.

Ald. *I shall not be wanting in any thing that concerns mine Oath and Office, for the suppression of those that thus endeavour to suppress us; but if the nearest Friend I have offends against the Law, and it shall come to my cognizance, I shall assuredly inflict the Penalties of the Statute for that Vice, be it*
what

what it will, that comes within my Jurisdiction and Power ; For Oaths, I perceive, are Sacred things, that cannot be violated without the sin of Perjury, which is of no less perilous nature, than odious name. Well ; you see, Sir, Supper is come in, and I must beg you to bless our Table. And God Almighty grant that all Divisions may cease among us, and Rebellion and Tumult, since it cannot be intreated, may, at the last, be scared to Silence.

Vic. AMEN.

And

*And now, that your poor Vicar, with his waste
 As slender as his Table, may give taste
 Of his Poetick fury ; all the rage
 That he can spit from his small wooden Cage :
 Where, like a Bird of Athens, he sits mute,
 Which when they meet in Couples do dispute.
 His grave Antagonist, with his dear Joyce,
 Making Lambicks in her Gate and Voyce,
 After the toyl and sad storms of the day,
 Was wilking to divert himself with play :
 When, I condemn'd, a melancholy Pen
 Epitomis'd an Eagle to a Wren.*

*But, presently, damnation men appear'd,
 At view of whom the little Crest was rear'd ;
 On first sight of the fire the brain did boyl,
 And heated to a vapour did recoil ;
 But, when the Mercury was fix'd, did vent
 All its disputes into a merriment ;
 And on Poetick Boggpipes, ready blown
 To sound a doom, the Vicar play'd his own.
 Put Monks and Presbyterians in a Cell,
 That both together may thy Fate foretell ;
 The one from rigid Precepts of his Art,
 T'other from Pulses of a trembling heart :
 Either, and both, would damn me to the flames,
 And disagree in nothing but in names.
 Rigid Prognosticators ! whose fierce stars
 Kindle the flames blown by you Sons of Mars,*

And

*And turn vast Kingdoms into fire and smook,
 Whilst your Associates in Rivers croak;
 'Till covering all the World, like Egypt's Frogs,
 They shake themselves, from whence engulphing
 Heated and boyled, by your enrag'd Ire, (Bogs
 Swell, 'till they burst in brimstone and in fire:
 And as the roaring Ætna's angry face
 Damns by reflection all the Giants Race;
 And as it spits Rivers of Brimstone full,
 So foameth the, horn-mad, Geneva Bull.
 Take thy full swing then, do but shake thy head,
 Snuff out the Vicars rage, and look him dead,
 Severe Fanatick, with thy meager face,
 The only Relick of accurs'd Cham's Race;
 Who didst a Pulpit full of Malice vent,
 Hell and Damnation thy nourishment:
 Disgorge thy self ex tempore, and frown
 Th' Author to, what he has, a Market Town.*

FINIS.

